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The New Era Lectureship, University of
Southern California—Fourth Series

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DEDICATION

TO THE MEMORY OF
TWO LITTLE CHILDREN
MARGARET REBECCA HUGHES
MORRIS SHARP HUGHES

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PREFACE

THE following lectures were delivered in 1925 at the University of Southern California, on the New Era Foundation, and by the courteous invitation of President Rufus B. von KleinSmid and Dean John F. Fisher. While the author spoke under collegiate auspices, he had no ambition of appearing in the role of a technical theologian. If the chapters herein have any merit, that merit consists in the human quality of what has been attempted. Speaking in the first person, let me say that for the past decade the conviction has been strong with me that the informing and pervasive and persuasive principle of the final theology must be found in the teaching of Jesus about the Father. With the growth of parental instinct and parental experience in my own life, I have found that, more and more, thinking and feeling have focused themselves upon the domestic figure of speech. What has been written herein could not possibly have come from

my pen ten years ago. The commentaries of actual life have been necessary in its production.

But I have conceived that these pages might have a value for young clergymen as suggestions in advance of their actual experiences, and as offering a norm about which their own views may grow to greater clearness and definiteness. At the time of the delivery of the lectures some good friends suggested the inclusion of certain formal definitions of God, of heredity, of prayer, of salvation. These proffers were not resented, even though they were not accepted. We who are parents would not care to have our children define us as mammals, and give accurate distinctions of any genus and species that might technically be involved in our complex natures! The picture of the little child framing dictionary and scientific definitions of its father and mother is not particularly engaging; and we feel confident that it will get nearer to the essential truth if it leaves the dogmatics to those rather fearsome persons who have long since escaped from the tender nurseries of the home!

The seeker of theological dogmatics will be disappointed in what I have attempted. My hope is that the seeker for God himself, as revealed in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will find herein a bit of light for his pathway.

EDWIN H. HUGHES.

Chicago, Illinois, October 8, 1925.

CHAPTER I

THE SEARCH FOR A NAME

UNDER what name shall we think of God? The mythologies have given their strange answers, often phrased in terms of weak anthropology, and wrought into tales so freakish as to lose their standing with the growth of the years. Superstitions have made their replies, peopling the world with minor deities, benevolent and malevolent, and seeking mostly to propitiate the monsters of their own bizarre creation. Partial theologies have offered their responses, presenting conceptions that were fragmentary, and frequently making God the exaggerated image of one phase, or some phases, of life. The whole history is one of deepest pathos and it is not to be dismissed with a shrug of the intellectual shoulder; neither is it to be treated as if the painful struggles were parts of an age-long comedy. The sympathetic students are more likely to find in them all limited,

and oftentimes pitiable, efforts to find God, as if each actor in the drama of tears and sighs, of ecstasies and aspirations, were seeking to utter the cry of Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

But that there is progress in the search is apparent, if only one will grant intervals for the study. When we pass into the Hebrew Scriptures, as representing the purest and most spiritual approaches of the long periods which they chronicle, the forward movement, however slow, is solid and steady. Men who are fond of applying mathematics to the Bible tell us that the Great Book gives us two hundred and fifty-six names for the Messiah, or for God, or for Christ. Be the number less or more, it is plain that each of the names is an attempt to express some part of the infinite nature, some glimpse into the divine heart, some approach of the Spirit of God to our own spirits. The Moffatt translation of the Old Testament has revived the debate about the proper rendering of the word "Jehovah"—whose content, it may be affirmed, still evades our scholars. "Jahweh" is a syllable less in length but is not

a syllable nearer in meaning. Doctor Moffatt's "The Eternal" seizes upon one aspect of the Divine Being and leaves us with the sense of "everness," yet without any deep look into the essential nature of God. We may find ourselves rather rejoicing in this fact, because it means that "the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods." He is not to be captured within any of our easy and jaunty definitions, nor held within the grasp of a limited name. Reverence finds itself made more reverent by the fact that the name of God which meets us at the gateway of the Holy Bible is no final designation. It is the beginning of names, the hint of a Being, the starting point of the revelation which was with the passing seasons of men's souls to summon many vocabularies for the highest purpose and to find them all gloriously inadequate for expressing the infinite perfection.

Thus it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the history of faith in God is symbolized by a procession of changing names. Even as Jacob becomes Israel and Joses becomes Barnabas, because the new life deserves a new name, so in a wholly

different way do the gleams of revelation about God bring new names into the speech of believers. Jahweh, Elohim, Emanuel, Counsellor, Shepherd, Lord of Hosts, King of Kings—so do the language symbols arrive as new glimpses of God are gained. Each name stands for a new phase of the divine life, or else for the ineffable and glorious mystery of that life. Somewhat the same thing goes on in the appreciation of a limited human career. It would be interesting to make a study of the names that have been applied to Abraham Lincoln, and interesting, also, to give dates to the appearance of these names. The “rail-splitter,” the “Mississippi boatman,” the “back-woods lawyer,” the “political debater,” “Old Abe,” “Father Abraham,” the “Great Commoner,” the “Emancipator,” the “Liberator”—thus do the names assemble themselves about the great personality. Even here there may be traced a growth of appreciative revelation. As Lincoln’s life unfolds into new aspects of influence and power, new appellations arrive. “Rail-splitter” is not final: it will not serve fully after the Eman-

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cipation Proclamation comes, or after the tragedy of martyrdom. The names are fragmentary revelations of a life.

This human illustration is a feeble symbol of the nomenclature that relates to God. Who can tell how many names have been given to him, in biblical and in extra-biblical literature? It is scarcely an overstatement that we would find in the full list an encyclopædæa of holy names. Each one would be a limited definition of his being. We do well in saying "limited." If to define is to "limit," and to name is to bound, then surely the revelations of God give full proof of the inadequacy of words. The greatening sense of God calls for a greatening vocabulary. We put our conception into a word, and soon the conception defies the word. We bound our thought of God with a name, and quickly our thought sweeps beyond the verbal boundary. Some one has declared that we need a modern equivalent for the Saviour's figure of the new wine and the old bottles: and perhaps some genius in phrases will find a successor in a figure based upon automobile or aeroplane! In

the meantime the ancient simile is fairly understood. Do we strain that simile when we affirm that in one aspect the history of our blessed faith is the story of bursting wine-skins? One can hear constantly along the way the growing sounds of life. Occasionally the sounds become explosions! The figure might easily be carried so far as to violate literary good taste; but it could scarcely be carried so far as to violate the historical truth. Tennyson was gloriously right when he wrote:

“Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be.
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O God, art more than they!”

Even the figure in these lines is itself used as applied to the Highest. He is Light! Saying it, we sense both the truth and the insufficiency of its statement. We search for the better symbol; and so we pass along the path of Light to the source of Light, and we speak of the Sun of Righteousness! Our name for God refuses always to stop short of the ultimate thing.

Sometimes we must all think that, among the forms of idolatry, none would

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be so appealing as the worship of the sun—wherein we bow before the source of light and heat, the sustainer of the world's life, the cause of the earth's unmeasurable fertilities. From the standpoint of spiritual symbolism the figure of speech based on light has always seemed appealing. *He* is "the bright and morning star," the "day-spring from on high," "the light that no man can approach unto," "the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings." Christ is "the light of the world." "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The word, too, is in our vision of the final abode, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Thus in this search for a name we find the biblical writers often turning their faces toward "light." After biblical times it is much the same. That word "light" could be traced down all the centuries of Christian testimony. Goethe cried in his dying moment, "Light, more light!" Luther frequently put its gleam into his writings. John Robinson started our spiritual and

political forefathers from the shores of Holland with the assurance that more "light" would break from the word of God. In his perplexity John Henry Newman wrote:

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom;
Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on!"

In his later perplexity, when all his plans for work in his changed allegiance were being thwarted by ecclesiastical schemes, he was still to seek the guidance and comfort of the light: and so he wrote words not so familiar:

"Unveil, O Lord, and on us shine
In glory and in grace.
The tawdry world grows pale before
The shining of thy face.

"Till thou art seen, it doth appear
A sort of fairy ground,
Where suns unsetting light the skies
And flowers, and fruits abound.

"But when thy purer, keener flame
Is poured upon our sight,
It loses all its power to charm
And what was day is night."

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There are more of the verses, but the figure of light halts at this point. It is not a marvel that this figure is frequent in religious speech. In power and purity, in grace and beauty, and in life-sustaining meaning it has won its place as the premier metaphor taken from the creations of God to represent God himself. But radiant as it may be in suggestion, it is not the ultimate simile. No one object in nature can adequately stand for the Lord of nature.

Hence the search for a name has continued among the metaphors and similes of personality. The quests may not be separated by exact lines; yet one can trace the seeking periods somewhat and can readily discern that their emphasis was gained from immediate and pressing problems, or from some phase of passing life. To those who were dealing with the mystery of the earth and of its products God would appear as Creator. To those who were making their way laboriously out of legal chaos into legal control, he would appear as Judge. To those who traveled through a land of strangers and pressed on to found a government of their own, or to

those who, having founded that government, were engaged in the task of welding it into more secure strength, he would appear as King. To those who were compelled to build around all their cities and towns high and heavy walls as a protection against their enemies, and who dwelt always in the threatening presence of war, he would appear as the Lord of Hosts. To those who in the days of quiet followed their flocks in pastures green or by waters still, or who led wayward sheep in times of storm and over barren mountain sides, he would appear as Shepherd. Is it too much to say that life itself, as it passed through varying stages of experience, was engaged in the search for God's name and was ever presenting a partial offering to the lexicon of the heart? Or is it again too much to say that the generations all repeat in a spiritual sense the episode of Jacob at "the ford Jabbok," and that one of the motives of the struggle is seen in the question of the patriarch, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name"?

Thus the search continued. One marvels at times that the patriarchal sense of

the Jews did not sooner flower into the speech of the home. Since the spiritual religion of the One God lifted its first altar in the moving tent of an Abraham, "the father of a multitude," it is astonishing that the hint of the parental name did not find an earlier welcome. Yet, strangely enough, the name "Father" is said to be applied to God only seven times in the Old Testament. Five times he is represented as holding the paternal relation to the Jewish people; twice he is described as holding that relation to individuals. One of these latter instances is seen in the promise made to David that God would be a father to the youthful Solomon; the other is a prophecy that in coming time men would pray to God addressing him as Father. It seems strange that the Old Testament, with its thousands of references to God, so seldom adopts the persuasive title of "fatherhood." Once the Messianic gleam lighted the sky and made it the loving shadow of the home and put the words "the Everlasting Father" over the entry.

But although the books of the ancient

Covenant are in space and bulk far greater than those of the New, there is to be found in all their sweep only one prayer addressed to God as Father. That came from Isaiah, in the beautiful and prophetic passage wherein the evangelical prophet rises toward the gospel height, and says, "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father." It must be granted, however, that the normal feeling of the Old Testament is quite foreign to this endearing address. The spirit of war was well-nigh constant, and that spirit does not primarily give birth to ideas of fatherhood and brotherhood. Within recent years our own vocabulary returned considerably to martial terms. Even the imprecatory psalms were born again and had their revival, while the biblical sentence, "The Lord God is a man of war," crashed into the speech of the sanctuary. In ages when war was all but chronic, the tents of armies cast into the rear the gentle suggestion of the tents of the patriarchs, and the great and appealing name of God halted on its way

to the ritual of men's spirits. The road forward to the conception of fatherhood was long and hard: and it came to its grateful ending only when men found an Elder Brother so great and wise and good that he gathered the scattered peoples within the family area and broke the spell of their orphanhood by saying, "When ye pray, say, Our Father."

This teaching of Jesus concerning the parental God was his central and essential message. As we shall later see, it was not with him simply a doctrine of flabby sentimentality; neither was it a matter of mere genealogy that made inevitable a spiritual and meaningful relation. But the Saviour's name for God immediately began to dominate the idiom of the New Testament of his grace. The first question that the by-standers heard him put to his mother was, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The last words on the cross were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The final assurance that his disciples caught ere the Bethany sky received him out of their sight was about "the promise of the

Father." The parental name is the initial word in the baptismal formula, the explaining word in the teaching about Providence, the alluring word in the lesson or prayer. That name did not banish all the other names of God, but it did move to the front of them all to give leadership to their meanings. Its dominance in the New Testament seems to proclaim that the search for the name had come to its goal, and that the speech of earth had at last captured the heavenly accent.

We return now to the wonderful arithmetic of the Bible. The Old Testament is more than three times as long as the New. Yet the Old Testament calls God Father seven times, while the New Testament speaks of him as Father two hundred and sixty-five times! Perhaps different calculators would get slightly different figures; for the border-lines of language are not fixed with mathematical exactness. The general, if not the precise, relativity stands good. Those who are fond of applying addition and multiplication tables to the Bible can consider the spaces of the two Testaments and determine the proportion. It will

prove a far more profitable and spiritual study than will the labored consideration of the mystical numbers in Daniel and in the Apocalypse! It is, at least and at best, the highest and most gracious example of "progressive revelation." It gives us warrant for affirming that no man is true to the Christian conception of God or has found the key to personal relationship with him until he has learned the lesson of the divine Fatherhood. Philip once said to Christ, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." We may assert with filial dogmatism that no other revelation will suffice.

Some may say that here again we are dealing with a figure of speech, or that we still make God in the image of man, by merely changing to a gentler anthropomorphism. We must not, however, be deterred by the shallow insistence that theology has not as much liberty to use metaphors and similes as science may claim. The word "Father" is suited to our natures and finds an increasing commentary in our experiences. We need not wait for maturity or for the arrival of our

earthly parenthood for the beginning of its revelation. It may be interpreted, partially and yet really, from the filial side. Sons and daughters find its meaning in their fathers and mothers, even as fathers and mothers find its meaning in their sons and daughters. We may well presume also that with God the ideal of fatherhood is seen to work downward to our lives. Instead of saying that we fashion God after the pattern of human parenthood, may we not, rather, say that human fatherhood is simply "an imperfect copy" of the divine Fatherhood? It would certainly be truer to say that God has made our paternity on the model of his own than to say that we fashion his paternity after the model of ours. This is doubtless the meaning in Ephesians where the original of Paul's language will allow the translation, "the Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named." Nevertheless we, in reaching our thought, may work from the man side Godward, just as God, in fashioning our *nature*, worked from the God side manward. Indeed, if our faith keeps a Creator at all, this must

represent the inevitable process. "Every good gift and every perfect gift . . . cometh down from the Father"; and this is just as true of earthly parenthood as it is of the minor gifts. The path along whose downward ways the goodness comes is the path along whose upward ways the gratitude must go. We are thus allowed to take the precious elements in human parenthood and lift them up to the highest. "God made man in his own image," and, more specifically, he made parents in his own image. All their strength, their patience, their wisdom, their knowledge, their love may be exalted toward infinitude until reverent hearts find themselves in that fellowship of confession which says, "Our Father."

A rather grim type of theologian may here join the cold philosopher with another peculiar objection. Without doubt there is in certain theological quarters a dread of the parental theology. This dread is born partly of a desire to maintain strictly the distinction between genealogical and evangelical sonship—a distinction which shall have its defense in a later chapter; but the

dread is likewise born of a tendency to run the parental conception off into softness, until the thought of God loses royal power, and we are left with infinite sentimentality lodged upon a doubtful throne. Without question some alleged theologians have given reason for this dread. They come perilously near to turning the conception of God into an excuse, if not into an argument, for sin. As the thought of God as King, or Judge, can be construed into dreadful tyrannies, so can the thought of God as Father be construed into amiable weaknesses. But this twist toward flabbiness is not a necessary part of the parental theology. Hearing some soft-spoken advocates of the perversion, we must wonder what kind of parents they had. Do earthly fathers and mothers have no discipline, no demands, no penalties, no banishments? Within human experience do all the prodigal sons return from the swine-field? Or do not some of them act directly as if that dreadful resort had become their native land? And have we not seen children go to that awful limit of mutiny where heartlessness trampled on hearts and the paren-

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tal resources were exhausted? And, yet again, have we not known instances where the departure of children from the home was a boon; or even, terrible as it may sound, where the death of children was an event not to be mourned? Jesus Christ who gave us the parental name for God did not permit the conception to degenerate into feebleness, as many of his words will witness. So in the adoption of this teaching of love and power we shall decline to yield to the bold philosopher on the one hand or to the scared theologian on the other. We shall insist on taking the doctrine of Christ and on holding it in that balanced meaning which he himself conferred upon the word.

We return once more to the human commentaries. We need not now pay special heed to the occasional demand for a changed phraseology that will take account of the equal halves of earthly parenthood. A recent novel speaks jokingly of that type of clergyman who calls himself Father and dresses like Mother! More seriously, a secular paper has inquired whether the emphasis of the Roman Cath-

olic Church upon the Virgin Mary does not make a feminine, and more easy, path to God. But the Christian centuries have not quarreled with the parental name of God, because the believers have well known that the nature set forth in the name stood for complete parenthood and possessed within itself all the dear and mighty qualities that the double parenthood of our homes may suggest. It is safe to say that when we join Jesus in saying "Our Father," we have not the slightest feeling that the form of approach is an implied slur on motherhood any more than we would feel that the doctrine of the virgin birth is an "implied slur on fatherhood."

We may recall now our earliest thought of our human parent. We gazed upon his form as he towered above us, and we thought him so strong that danger could not come near him without rebuke. We heard him speak and thought him grandly wise and deemed that for him no problem was too vast. We felt the love of his heart and, in our better moments, knew that his tenderness toward us could not be put into speech. To us he seemed

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majestic, intellectual, affectionate. We fled to his arms for protection, for counsel, for love. Enlarge that conception. Let it pass beyond all our poor human measurements until it means infinite relationships. Take that earthly father's arm; increase its reach and its strength until it bears all seas in the hollow places of the hands, lies beneath the distant stars, pushes every planet in its dizzy orbit, and holds the blazing suns in their centers of light and heat. You have a father with boundless strength. Take that earthly father's mind: increase its vision and penetration until it sees every flash of light, every covert of darkness, every falling sparrow, every thought of purity or shame, every struggle in the soul of man. Take that earthly father's heart. Enlarge its scope of affection until the world comes within the circle of its love. Make it a heart so great that it gathers all men into its sure protection; so impartial that it disregards all superficial distinctions; so tender that it sorrows with all sorrow and rejoices with all joy, and measures every gift and every lack by the standard of mercy everlasting.

You have a father with infinite love. Because you believe that God made our human parenthood after the pattern of his own, you have enlarged the thought of the ideal earthly father until his arm is omnipotent, his mind omniscient, his wisdom unfailing, his love all-embracing. So doing, you have moved up toward our Saviour's meaning when he gave us the name "Our Father."

Christ did not argue about the name. He offered it to us as a gift out of his own insight and authority. Putting the case in its lowest terms, the best Man who ever walked the earth assembled the meanings from all the good, but partial, names of God and combined them in the parental conception. He did not transform the listening crowds by sea or on mountain into debating groups while he led them on the severe paths of logic to the wondrous goal. Syllogisms are not the proofs of parental nature; the evidences are found at last in certain instinctive longings and hopes and aspirations that spring not from the mind alone, nor from the heart alone, but, rather, from the total life of man as it

seeks to reach the full life of God. We shrink from calling Christ a religious genius or even a mighty specialist in the things of the spirit, lest, indeed, our words make wrong impressions. But the fact remains that the most wondrous Teacher of the soul proclaimed that God was Father; and the fact abides, as well, that the lesson won the grateful assent of men. The long search for the most revealing name of God came to its end in Jesus Christ. While it remains forever true that no name can spell the full glory of God, it is likewise true that the quest now is not for a new name but for the blessed meanings of the name already given. Those meanings will be more and more disclosed; and the revelations will be continued even in the Father's house. This is not the time for dogmatic Christology. But the search does have a personal goal. Standing again with Philip we say, "Show us the Father"; and we find the sufficing response to our prayer in Him who said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

CHAPTER II

THE FAMILY TREE

THE present period is engaged in a re-study of ancestry. For long the emphasis was placed upon environment; now it has swung back toward heredity. Wiggam's volume *The Fruit of the Family Tree* is one evidence, while the advocacy of "eugenics" has well-nigh become a movement. It seems strange that a priest, whose vows decreed that the family tree should halt with himself, should by his amazing experiments with plants and beasts have so affected thinking and investigating as to give his name to an underscored theory of heredity. Within recent years the proper noun "Mendel" has been made over into a common noun—"mendelism."

In theology itself there has long been a form of debate on the deeper ancestral question. The Christian faith had not been in the world many decades ere the discussion began between creationism and

traducianism. Creationism declared that every soul is a direct and immediate creation of God; traducianism, that a soul is derived from the earthly parents. Perhaps this bald form of statement is an overstatement; yet it does give the main contention of the lengthy ordeal of words. As in practically every such case, a medium theory appeared, combining the views of both the old theories and making God, as the Eternal Father, and earthly parents, sharers and partners in the new life. The nearer ancestry is found in the terrestrial family: the farther is in God. In the theistic, and surely in the Christian, conception, the Father in heaven cannot be excluded from the family tree. He is the ultimate and final Ancestor.

On the strictly human side the study is an interesting one. It is often asserted, even jokingly, that a man has no choice in the selection of his forbears. There is an element of necessity in the family. A type of foreordination seems to have been busy in this sphere. Our blood relations of the past are not for us among the electives; they are rather among the requirements.

To deny them seems shameful; to claim credit for their achievements seems scarcely modest or ethical. It is sometimes said—and with some warrant—that a man whose family tree has shot branches up into distinction is prone to glorify human ancestry, while the man whose known family tree has had no conspicuous limbs is apt to ridicule ancestry. Prejudice works in dealing with this subject, as well as with any other. Even where ideals have been different, a likeness may be found here. The Puritan and Pilgrim came to Massachusetts; the Cavalier came to Virginia. There are some in the one section who are not averse to the advertisement that their forefathers came over in the Mayflower, and some in the other section who with outward modesty enroll themselves among the “first families.” It must be admitted that if we could think of ourselves as endowed with prenatal volition as well as with present preferences, we would all choose the ancestral line of the “Edwardses” rather than that of the “Jukes”!

Yet without question the ledger of genealogy would record for us all both gains

and losses. Long since John Godfrey Saxe wrote some waggish lines:

“Depend upon it, my snobbish friend,
Your family tree you can’t ascend
Without good reason to apprehend
You may find it waxed at the other end
With some plebeian vocation:
Or worse than that, your boasted line
May end in a string of stronger twine
That plagued some worthy relation.”

After all, ancestry of the genealogical type is a two-edged sword: it cuts both ways. Besides, as we move backward, the number of earthly ancestors becomes bewildering. There is an arithmetical progression. Two become four; four, eight; eight, sixteen! A pencil will convince us that in Martin Luther’s birth year each of us must have had well-nigh two thousand grandparents, and many of them only technically labeled by the adjective “great.” An eminent citizen of America, whose wife had quietly exploited her family tree, procured the services of an expert genealogist who by proper research produced ancestral marvels. The farther you go the more chances you have! When this citizen laid

before his wife a record that reached into the families of the Saxon kings, he was quaintly admonished that if he went back a bit more, he would probably strike Ananias! Yes! And probably also some vast speaker of God's truth! In this realm we are not without a spiritual hint. Many of us do not know the names of our great-great grandparents; but we do trace our religious lineage back over the years until our family tree bears the names of Paul and Abraham.

All this carries us forward to the view of Christ. Here it may be surely said that he made earthly ancestry neither a joke nor a fetish. His biographers in the New Testament thought it well to attempt Christ's genealogy. Christ himself did not allude to the matter. Is it too much to assert that we would have a sense of disappointment if the teaching of Christ had given a high place to physical ancestry as such? Did he assert that it, *per se*, would play a part in the kingdom of heaven? Or that ancestry assured sainthood? Jewish history was perplexing in that respect. Eli was good; Hophni and Phinehas bad.

Samuel was righteous: and his sons did evil in the sight of God. Josiah was the good son of a bad father, and the good father of a bad son! Very often families, like fields, appear to lose their richness. There are few families in America prominent in the present civil life whose forebears were distinguished one or two hundred years ago. Within smaller limits we see the like changes. Many old communities carry within themselves some faded and worn-out aristocracies. The "recessions" provided by Mendel's theory are on the human side too subtle to be charted. Allowing all possible leeway to the so-called "throw-back," the eugenists would scarcely have selected the good-natured Thomas Lincoln as the immediate ancestor for the greatest man of the nineteenth century!

At this point Christ gives us a most significant illustration. The Jews had a right to boast of their ancestry, if any people had such a right. Through thousands of years their forefathers had kept the light of spiritual religion burning, had guarded the sacred doctrine of monotheism, had

been the proclaimers of hopeful prophecy, and had lived under a sense of the profound calling of God for the establishment of his kingdom. Their race, too, had been kept "pure." Their physical unity had stamped itself upon their features. Notwithstanding occasional schisms, that had to them seemed desperate, their religious unity had been well maintained. They were one in their opposition to idolatry, one in their emphasis on God's unity, one in their expectancy of the coming Messiah, one in their faith that from their race was to come the salvation of the world. This was their heritage. If an American may be tempted to boast that his family line reaches back over three centuries to the Plymouth or Massachusetts Bay Colony, much more might a Jew in the Saviour's time boast that his family tree reached back to the first patriarch and had been unbroken and untainted for millenniums. It is doubtless difficult for us, with the breadth that has been fused into our people by a marvelous mixing of races, to appreciate the glory that the Jew assigned to his ancestry. Pride crept into his voice

when he gathered his family about himself and made his fine claim, "Abraham is our father."

If this claim be not of special value as a revelation of the Jew, it is valuable because it called forth the Saviour's view. It is surprising to find how many of the questions of life were touched by him in his brief messages. Here is this matter of earthly ancestry. What shall be our attitude? We are all descendants. Reaching back over the stretch of history is our family line. That line has such a definite bearing upon our being, and it may be, also, upon our powers, that we can scarcely be indifferent to its meaning. But what relation shall we take to our long relationship? To boast of it is scarcely seemly; to be ashamed of it scarcely manly; to be silent about it scarcely possible. Besides, with the near branches of our family tree we are of necessity brought into close contact. Our parents and grandparents, to go no farther back, have been with us decided factors of influence, being our near heredity and often an important part of our environment. What did Jesus have to

say about all this? The reply is, He spiritualized this fact as he spiritualized all facts. Behind the physical ancestries he saw the deeper and higher ancestries. Halting not on the surface, he probed to the inner questions.

So when the Jews said, "Abraham is our father," he replied: "That may be true only in the physical sense. In that meaning you are Abraham's seed. But who is your spiritual ancestor? You claim Abraham's blood. Can you claim his truth, his heroism, his consecration?" Or, to put the case in his own words, Jesus said, "If ye were the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham." His main thought, as he mentions it a moment later, is that Abraham was open to the truth. This gives us a partial definition of the word "works." Evidently, Christ did not refer to anything that was merely outward in the life of Abraham save as the outward thing stood for inner disposition and character. Without that construction the deeds of Abraham are only a jumble of events. With that construction they fall under a law of purposeful unity. He went out from Ur of the Chaldees because he

believed in God and wished to find a home for the truth about God. He was willing to offer his prayer for a wicked city because he believed in God and desired to turn misguided people over to the divine mercy. He was the "father of the faithful" even more than he was the father of a race. To-day the Jews and the Moham-medans and the Christians all claim the great patriarch as a spiritual ancestor. Yet in the deepest sense the children of Abraham are those who, believing in God, are willing to trust themselves to him, to accept new revelations concerning his nature, to seek new conditions for the promoting of his truth, to make real ventures of the outward life in order that the innermost life may be kept loyal to God and his commands. Instead, therefore, of underscoring the fact that the Jews were the physical descendants of Abraham, Jesus put to them the more significant questions: "Are you spiritual descendants of Abraham? Are you the inheritors of his faith in God and of his devotion to God's call?" That, Jesus declared, was the permanent and worthy view of ancestry.

Once again Christ treated the matter of relationship in this essential way. He is speaking of the great things of the Kingdom when one announces to him, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee." Jesus at once asserted the higher doctrine of the relatives of the spirit. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." This language at first seems harsh, an almost wanton putting aside of the close ties of the family tree. We are even prone to relieve ourselves by construing it in connection with his usual attitude toward his people and the home. After the event in the Temple when he was twelve years of age, he goes back to Nazareth to be "subject unto his parents." When he begins to teach, his words strangely exalt home life. The church ritual ever declares that he adorned and beautified marriage by his first miracle that he wrought at Cana of

Galilee. While in practically all other problems he gave only general principles for guidance, with regard to marriage and divorce he gave definite rules that have always vexed those who would build domestic life on shifting sand. His healing mercy seemed to flow most readily toward the home, as in the cases of the widow's son at Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and the raising of Lazarus. He glorified childhood with unforgettable words. On the cross he committed his mother to his best-beloved and "best-to-do" disciple, assigning her to the double care of affection and comfort. Indeed, the homeless Christ is the Saviour of the home. Here, as elsewhere, there was something vicarious in him.

Thus there must be explanations of Christ's seeming harshness. It may have been his assertion against interference. The New Testament gives us several hints that Jesus' earthly brethren did not always understand him. We may well wonder if a deep element in the tragedy of Christ's life was not in a certain lack of sympathy from the people of his own home. They are nearly always seen in the attitude of

interferers. It came out all right in the end. One of those to whom he appeared most early after his resurrection was his brother James. Two of his brothers are authors of books in the New Testament. His brothers and his mother were among those who waited for the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Doubtless Jesus won the narrow, but blessed, fellowship of the home, because he was true to the wider fellowship. Cannot a man confine himself too much to his home? Does domestic spirit never defeat public spirit? May not the hearthstone become a refuge for selfishness as well as a harbor for love? So Christ asserts the wider obligation and the deeper relationship. He gives us a chance to choose relatives. If we will be of Christ's kind, we shall be of Christ's kin. Doing the will of the Father in heaven, we win a beautiful growth for the family tree of the soul. Glorious relatives people our new world; and among these the best is He who declared that "whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

The Saviour's lesson here will not lack for illustrations from general life or from our own experiences. We have all discovered that blood-relationship, to be vital and meaningful, must be supplemented by something spiritual. The most real fellowship must grow from within and must be rooted in the soul. Our nearer blood relationships carry with them large responsibilities and frequently large joys. But even with parents and children and brothers and sisters, the mere family tie is not adequate. Mothers and daughters fail sometimes to live in peace, and their associations are irritations. Fathers and sons occasionally know little harmony and spend their days in mutual antagonisms. Brothers grow strangely apart unless they have the deeper bond. Three of the early tragedies of the Bible grew out of the clashing of brothers by blood. Cain slew Abel and even put the admitted relationship into his evasive question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The tent of Isaac was not big enough for both Jacob and Esau, and only a spiritual experience brought the two sons of the one earthly father into measurable

sympathy again. The actual brethren of Joseph were not hindered by their brotherhood from casting the lad into the pit, nor from selling him into slavery, even as their actual sonship did not prevent them from cruelly deceiving their aging father. The examples are nearer. Ridding ourselves for the moment from overdone sentiment, we must admit that there are those related to us by blood who do not mean as much for our fellowship as do others with whom we trace no family relationship whatsoever. We may have relatives between whom and ourselves there is little sympathy. If we are to count marriage as one of the deepest and most sacred unions formed on earth, we come upon the singular fact that close consanguinity is often in law a bar against marriage. Our whole theory is that the best foundation for a new family is wholesome love between two persons who do not belong to the same families! For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave only unto his wife. When this bond of love is made we may bid farewell to the old family relationships as primary, and start down the long road

with one whom we never saw until manhood or womanhood had come. Every new family tree begins with a confession that belongs to the spirit.

So do we come back to Christ's principle about the true descendants of Abraham. It applies, as well, to nearer figures in the progress of God's kingdom. We know little or nothing of the family life of Saint Paul. He himself leaves the matter to reticence. Yet he makes a touching reference to Timothy as his "son in the faith." Timothy had a father after the flesh. The epistle mentions the young man's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, and the relation that they had in the heredity of faith and in the environment of character for the life of Timothy. Who knows who was Timothy's genealogical father? Doubtless that father's relation to his son was without spiritual significance and the world has sifted out the unessential and leaves the fact that Paul was the spiritual ancestor of the young disciple. In two letters we find numerous evidences of fatherly yearning and pride on Paul's part—as if, indeed, the

deprivation of actual parenthood left a heart that was hungry for the deeper paternity. How tender the phrases become: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, . . . to Timothy, my beloved child." Or again: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus, our hope; unto Timothy, my true child in the faith." The phrases read as if a starved heart were crying out for the holier substitute for earthly fatherhood. In the farther reaches of our own genealogy we come upon a fact like this. All of us had physical ancestors who lived when Paul was carrying on his missionary campaigns that at last brought the faith to us. Who can tell who they were? We all had family forbears living on the earth when Luther was lighting the fires of the Reformation. Who can tell who they were? The Joneses are many; but the Lutherans are far more. The Browns are numerous, but not so numerous as the Calvinists. The Smiths fill pages of our directories, but they are outnumbered by the Wesleyans! It must be admitted that

in the long run the world yields to Christ's conception of spiritual ancestry and descendancy.

We are now approaching the distinction between genealogical sonship and spiritual sonship. The long-discussed question returns, Is God the Father of all men? The reply cannot be given with an unqualified "Yes" or by an unqualified "No." By creation he is the Father of all. Our bodies were fashioned by his hands. He breathed into them, and we became living souls. The natural tie of sonship is thus fixed in our natures. It is possible both to underestimate and to overestimate this tie. We would surely all revolt against the statement that the men and women who are properly called "lost" may be the divine property but are not the divine children. One might as well affirm that the lost sheep ceased to be a sheep, or that the lost coin became unminted metal! In the third example in that chapter on "lostness" the prodigal seems to be more conscious of departed or marred sonship than does the father. "No more worthy to be called thy son"—this is the humble cry of

the wastrel. Yet even here there is a clinging to sonship, while on the part of the father there is no hint that the parental nature has been destroyed. Recently a book has appeared under the strange title, *God's Stepchildren*—a work of fiction dealing with a despairing tragedy of mixed bloods. In this book a Hottentot is made to put the query concerning her people, "Are not we brown people simply God's stepchildren?" The question is really a terrible one; and neither humanity nor any endurable theology will allow the suggested dilution of the parental nature in God. Should we lose our interest in his sadly limited children, we could still never be satisfied with such a mutilation of the divine heart. God a stepfather! The creatures made in his image stepchildren! Such a demi-God and demi-sons and demi-daughters fill us with a kind of terror, as if, indeed, we were approaching an area of semi-atheism! The genealogical tie must be preserved, and it must not be vacated of real meaning. Jesus' wonderful speeches about the Father in heaven were not reserved for his disciples alone. It

was "to the multitude, and to his disciples" that he said, "For one is your Father, which is in heaven."

So God is the Father of all in this family-tree sense. The relation is not as insignificant as some would have us believe. Out of it there comes on God's side a constant interest in us, as well as a constant wish to do for us the best things. On our side, however, the relation may reach dreadful perversions. It may become a misleading theory on which we rely in our unfilial attitude, or it may be made an evil dogma used to encourage and lull our souls in their sins. Indeed, most men are rather eager to believe in a wholesale and unmodified doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. They might say concerning it, as the Article of Religion says concerning another part of the creed, that it "is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." It is doubtless true that our own age talks too glibly about the divine fatherhood. We are not really saved until the emphasis upon the parental nature is joined with the emphasis upon the filial nature. We may say much about God the

Father, but, unless we claim our sonship in glad volition, the very doctrine of fatherhood is our condemnation. The son who mocked Noah would only have cursed his own heart by any easy mention of Noah's fatherhood. Absalom, who drove his father from the palace and sought his life and crown, would have wrought still deeper injury upon his own soul by a recital of the creed of David's fatherhood. It is true to the final ethics and the deepest facts to say that an attitude may be taken to the parenthood of God that may utterly destroy the sonship of man; and that the parental nature which is our hope may be converted into the basis of our souls' guilt.

Always, then, we must seek for ourselves the deeper bond, and we must proclaim its need for all men. If we could conceive by violent imagination that there was one soul in the world not created by God—one soul sprung from chance or necessity; that this orphan-spirit should harmonize itself with God, and looking up into his face say, "Thou hast not made me; but adopt me as thine own. I love

thee; I will serve thee and be to thee as a son"—who does not see that this lonely son of nothingness would become more truly a son of God than would anyone who, having been born of God's power and made in God's image, failed to meet God with filial loyalty? There is a hereditary sonship toward God; there is a spiritual sonship toward him. Saint Paul stood on Mars Hill and said that God was the universal Father and quoted the heathen poet who said, "We are also his offspring." The same apostle wrote to the Galatians saying, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." John puts it, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." There are other passages quite as piercing as these: and they command us to seek and gain the filial mood that Christ confers lest, indeed, we trick our hearts by the use of a pretty catechism and become the victims of a vain ritual.

We hesitate to carry the lesson further, or lower. Yet we must be true to the whole teaching of Christ. Does every

great truth have its opposite? Is there a possible hell over against every heaven? Concerning one Jesus said not that he was a son of God, but, rather, "a son of perdition." Again he looked into the faces of men who by creation were the sons of God but who by preference had sought a terrible adoption, and to them he said fiercely, "You are of your father, the devil." Had they cared to cast off that evil paternity, the opportunity was before them in Christ himself. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Until Christ came not even the worthiest of Old Testament worthies looked up to God and said distinctly and constantly, "Our Father." No man has caught the deeper and higher idea of God's Fatherhood until Jesus Christ has taught the filial lesson and granted the filial heart. As it was with the world, so must it be with us. We wait the coming of the Son of God in order that we may ourselves be the sons and daughters of God.

CHAPTER III

THE FATHERLY THRONE

THERE is a temptation to discard the figure of the "throne," for royalty is not as plentiful as it was in former days, and a throne not so popular. But as a symbol of the place of power out of which benefit may come the figure keeps its place in the religious speech of the world. Besides, even as in the title of this chapter where the forbidding noun is relieved by a kindly adjective, the Scripture brings a second noun to the aid of the first and speaks of "the throne of grace." The modification does not remove the crown, nor tarnish the gold, nor pluck away the scepter; but it does convert the signs of kingly power into tokens of regal love. Or, we may put the same thing into the language of the New Covenant by saying that the King of the one dispensation becomes the Father of the other dispensation. The royal chamber is not closed; it is illumined and glori-

fied. The throne abides, but it is as a throne of grace. The revelation is not unlike that which came to the American people when the letters written by Theodore Roosevelt to his children were published. The fighter against a city's lawlessness, the warrior of San Juan Hill, the fierce campaigner in political contests, the governor of a State, and the President of a nation, were all seen in the gentler role of love. The pet names that he gave his children were the revelations of himself. The ruler was seen as a father.

The conception had once been a promise of communion. Was it not the psalmist of whom it was said, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God"? But the psalmist never did just that. The word that was spoken to him by God never went back from him to God. Isaiah caught the gleam, "Doubtless thou art our Father, our Redeemer," but instead of carrying the word forward for communion, he pushed it back into the realm of workmanship and continued, "We are the clay, and thou the potter." Malachi gave the word a racial application, at the least, and wrote it at

the close of the Old Covenant, "Have we not all one father?" If the question was not one of doubt, neither was it one of prayer. The word that was uttered in his prophecy never became a part of his petition. Thus the forerunners of Christ seemed to tremble on the edge of the revelation. From certain heights of spiritual vision they saw the promised land, but they did not cross into its borders. They had need of the greater Guide.

When he came he carried the hints of David and Isaiah and Malachi into the deepest realm of the spirit and applied the parental doctrine to prayer. Those who heard him say, "When ye pray, say, Our Father," heard a message never before spoken. It was new in the Bible, new in the life of the world. Christ at once brought the doctrine of parenthood to a central citadel of the soul. Religious teachers will testify that the subject of prayer is not an easy one. Our best discussions leave many questions unanswered. The matter deals with the mystery of God's being, and of man's; with the mystery of God's power, and of man's freedom; with

the mystery of law, its place in the universe, and its relation to human volition; while yet other and minor mysteries cluster about the theme. Our syllogisms grope on their way to the royal palace, and our arguments do not surely guide us to the throne of grace. Into that baffling area of the soul's life Christ enters with the keyword. Once more he does not debate. He asserts. He speaks as if he had made the instincts and so could appeal to them with the "authority" that always astonishes the scribes. He gave the conception toward which the best of the prophets had strained, the language which pious lips had sought to utter, but had remained silent as if the hearts that would constrain the lips had not yet found the holy ritual.

Let it be frankly said that the word softens but does not solve the mystery. The nature of human parenthood is not an open book. Fatherhood and motherhood allow for many dear mysticisms. They could well repeat the word of Christ, we "have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Often our long, long thought keeps adding to their

biography as written in our hearts. In our relations with them the element of mystery was far greater than we imagined. At times we must become impatient with the unbeliever who assumes that the religious man faces mystery, while the unreligious deals only with the plain and the understood! Even in that realm where parents answer to the prayers of their children mysterious forces are at work. The child asks the father for the apple that hangs on the high bough of the tree. This is her prayer. How shall the parent respond? He bears the ladder to the tree, lifts himself upon its rungs, seizes the fruit, breaks it from the branch, descends to the ground, and places the red-cheeked apple in the hand of the red-cheeked child. It is all so simple! After all, the transaction is rather complex. Personal force does something against the law of gravitation. Personal force does something against the law of adhesion. The parent does not set aside so-called natural law, yet he does bring into the situation a personal law that issues into power. Philosophers and scientists have sought vainly for that bridge of mys-

tery over which the will of the inner man crosses to the control of the muscles. Thus the prayer of a child always draws upon a region of power that the child cannot at all comprehend. If it dragged its whys and wherefores to that limited throne of grace that is in the parental heart and waited for answers to all questions ere it should make requests, its prayers would never come to utterance. Thus human parenthood may readily serve as an illustration of the mystery of that higher parenthood to which our prayers are addressed; while the behavior of childhood in the presence of that mystery may become an example to those who can scarcely claim as yet to be wise adults in the family of God.

The child gets this wisdom from his instincts. He follows these and they lead him to the parental power and grace. Discovering parenthood he discovers prayer. Recently a little child who had been hearing much of the deaths of prominent people said, wistfully, "I do hope that the heavenly Father will not die!" Had some of us been there when she so spoke, we might

well have said to her: "May it never be so for you, dear child. Be careful never to choose orphanhood for yourself." After all, is not the history of prayerlessness the history of smothered instincts? The only funerals of God are those in our own hearts. As long as he is for us the living God, the crisis and sorrow and danger of life will send us to him. Some of us may recall periods in our own careers when measurably we ceased to pray. We felt perhaps that in so ceasing we were acting under an ethical motive. Prayer for us had become a meaningless performance, an empty ritual. Its practice seemed to invade our sincerity. So we adopted the creed of prayerlessness. That creed seemed to us adequate for normal days of ease and sunshine. Then grave pain or dreadful peril sought us, and our so-called ethics could not stand the strain. We cried out to God. Our instincts had their way once more. The secret of our return to the altar was this: we had not gotten rid of prayer because we had not gotten rid of the Father. Our children come to us with their petitions because they feel our par-

enthood. Unless you destroy for them the doctrine of that human parenthood you are not likely to prevail against the doctrine of their filial prayerfulness! Jesus' words were "Ask the Father"; and they are the most natural and real words in all the theology of prayer.

If the parental conception leaves room for the mystery, so does it likewise leave room for kindly refusals. There is a verse somewhere that reads:

"Even as prudent parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God perhaps is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things because it seemeth good."

Surely, the New Testament does not encourage the idea of unlimited and unconditioned answers to prayer. The bad man cannot make the good God yield to an evil desire. The foolish man cannot make the wise God the servant of folly. The angry man cannot force the strong God until he becomes the ally of human rage. One apostle said it rather bluntly, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your own pleasures,"

while Christ himself did not leave the universal adjective pronoun "whatsoever" as the lonely word of promise, since it is guarded by the phrase "in his name." As we grow older we must be more afraid of what might be called spiritual forgery! We seek to draw our drafts on the bank of Heaven by signing the name of Christ to our petitions when our own names would be the only real signatures. It is this fact that makes us less dogmatic about our prayers for physical and material benefits, even though our faith in God's care for us keeps larger confidence in the prayer for "our daily bread." It is so easy to mistake our own name for Christ's name. Why do we desire health, prosperity, fine homes? Do we desire them for Christ's sake? The questions must halt us often when we review sincerely the motives of our praying; and they may make us hesitate long ere we use the signature of Christ lest we be guilty of forging the blessed name.

Beyond this, the Fatherhood to which we bring our prayers is itself a limitation upon the answers. The direct replies to our petitions must come out of the kindly

realm of parenthood; and good and wise parents are not in the habit of allowing their power to be drawn upon in such a way as to ruin the deeper life of their children. The illustration from our own homes comes again as a witness. We always answer the prayers of our sons and daughters. Thinking back over our relations with them for thirty or forty years, we cannot remember when we did not make response to their appeals. Yet very often we responded by saying "No!" Let us not be deceived by the simplicity of the illustration. It touches an important phase of the prayer life. Every parent could say to the young child, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways." We hesitate to repeat the remainder of the passage which would put a heaven's distance between the thoughts and ways of parents and those of their children; still the chasm exists. Many of the prayers of the child, if answered affirmatively, would destroy the child. He wants late hours, when the early bed is better; dangerous dainties, when plain food is better; firearms when the simpler toy is better. Par-

ents would testify that if all the prayers addressed to them by their children were literally granted, no children would live to maturity. They are saved by the grace of kindly negatives. There is a poem to this effect:

“One night—the heavens shone supremely grand—
 A little child looked up and wondered why
 He might not touch a bit of that bright sky,
 Hold one fair star within his eager hand.

“And, as I listen to his childish longing,
 It finds a ready echo in my heart.
 Dreams, born of wild desire, come madly thronging,
 In which I have no fleeting share or part.
 And, like a little child, I cannot see
 Why so much brightness hangs too high for me.”

Yet, after all, that star of childish desire would prove a crushing and scorching gift. Therefore often our answer is “No.” It is, however, far from fair to say that the prayer is not answered. The name of the One to whom we pray being Father, it must graciously follow that one of the boundaries of the realm of prayer is established by Fatherhood. We may not pray to the Father and ask him to deny his name by the answer of destruction.

It becomes evident, therefore, that even as on the human side we should not use prayer in such a way as to destroy our sonship, so we may not ask that on the divine side it may be so used as to destroy Fatherhood. There is here a certain meaning on the upper side of prayer, with an obligation on that side for the maintenance of the character of God. We once knew a father to flee from a son because of the threatening demand of that son that the father should give him money for the purchase of rum. The father had the money; power was not lacking. The parental nature stood in the way. The affirmative answer to the coarse prayer would have destroyed sonship on the one side and fatherhood on the other. It is good to tarry at the altar with the thought of what our prayers may mean to God. There is a curious story in Strachey's human biography of Queen Victoria. It deals with a matter so intimate that one queries how knowledge of the event passed beyond the royal home. The prince consort certainly lived under conditions that put Paul's theory of the headship of the husband into

practical difficulties! The tale goes that the husband was offended and locked himself into his room in exile from his wife, the queen. Victoria, wishing to retain her dignity as monarch of a great people, knocked upon the door and in response to the question, "Who is there?" replied, "The queen of England." Twice she knocked and twice she gave the same answer. The door remained barred against her. The third time she replied to the question, "Who is there?" by saying, "It is your wife, Albert." When she changed her monarchical reply to a domestic reply, the door opened to her. The account is at best a crude illustration of the fact that monarchy cannot be the final element in God's relations with us. The King often seeks us, and we admit him the more readily when we detect the fatherly yearning in his own heart. In his prayer Jesus said a word with which sometimes we must tarry fondly, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." It is an expression of Christ's yearning for communion with his own, a token of the mutuality that is the

secret of all real companionship. The double test of prayer is that our petitions shall be such that their answers would not decrease the sense of sonship in ourselves nor affront the sense of parenthood in God.

Speaking again from our side, we may emphasize the fact that an important purpose of prayer is to beget and enlarge the filial spirit in our hearts. Any prayer that makes us less the sons of God is not true prayer. Petitions that break up the family of God can scarcely be offered to a Father in the name of his Fatherhood. It is not now the claim that the one result of prayer is the reaction upon the heart of the filial petitioner who grows more filial by reason of his prayer. Without doubt there is a rebound of prayer, and often some of these reflex effects are not of our seeking nor even of our conscious receiving. Moses went up into the mountain to talk with God. His object was to intercede for his people. When he descended from the height his face was touched with a strange radiance. He himself "wist not that his face shone." Stephen, the proto-martyr, was doubtless praying for strength for his

hour of trial. The members of the council of blood looked steadfastly upon him and "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." That changed countenance had not been the object of Stephen's prayer, but the face caught the inner light. Even of Christ it is written that "as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." We cannot conceive that Christ had prayed for the radiant face and the glistening garments. In the cases of the lawgiver, the martyr, the Saviour, the beauty of the light within touched the life without and registered itself in this glorious way.

Yet this theory of the reflexive influence of prayer must not be allowed to claim any monopoly. Long ago Gail Hamilton, in *Stumbling Blocks*, pointed out the philosophical absurdity involved in the statement that the reflex benefit of prayer exhausts its value. At this point man's nature does not contain an organized falsehood that lures us to prayer by indirection and pretence. To declare that we are invited to prayer for one thing, solely in order that we may get another thing, is to admit that the exercise of a continual

absurdity ever acts as a strengthener and purifier of the heart. Nor does that reflex theory, as exclusive, fare better in the light of the Saviour's illustrations. It is not easy to conceive the man whose friend came to him to ask for the loan of three loaves as thrusting his head from the window and counseling the outside solicitor to continue asking for the loaves, though he should not have them, on the ground that the petitions would graciously recoil upon his petitioning heart! Nor can we well believe that the human father of the Saviour's illustration could be represented as saying: "I will give no bread, and no fish. None the less, continue asking for bread and fish. The reactions will be most helpful to you." The reflex theory of prayer, as applied to the biblical illustrations, inevitably runs off into a comedy that becomes a tragedy. In truth the reactions of prayer, which come to us without our intent, are themselves evidences that prayer has its function within the realm of our direct purpose. The response of our hearts to a false lure would not seem to put prayer even on a plane of lofty ethics.

The doctrine of Fatherhood forbids a merely reflex theory of the prayer life.

None the less, there is a large realm of prayer wherein we may appeal for changes in ourselves. The prayer for repentance is for such a change; so is the prayer for faith, for conversion, for sanctification, for submission, for consecration. Our finest prayers are not for outer things but for inner moods. There is an almost ludicrous illustration of this fact in the piece of literature that first won America large literary recognition in England. In his *Biglow Papers* James Russell Lowell tells how he had but recently seen a goat kneeling on its fore-knees in an apparent attitude of prayer in order that it might eat grass with less difficulty! Going back to his home, Lowell wrote of it in this fashion: "It seemed to me a type of the common notion of prayer. Most people are ready enough to go down on their knees for material blessings, but how few for those spiritual gifts which alone are the answers to our orisons if we but knew it." Lowell's words are more than a moralization: they are an interpretation. In the last analysis

material gifts must be judged by their effects upon the spiritual life. Within the human realm we have all seen parental gifts so used as to destroy the filial spirit of children. At last the father became merely a treasury to be drawn upon for the satisfaction of a son's whims or extravagances. Money given sent the son eagerly to the swine-field and away from the father's house and the father's soul; money refused led to the rebellious spirit that banished sonship. In either case answers to the prayers worked for the routing of both sonship and fatherhood. After each transaction there was less real son, and, as genuine communion ceased, less real fatherhood as well. Hence any discussion of material answers to prayer must always consider the effect of such answers upon the filial spirit of the petitioner and must test them by their evidence of the Fatherly spirit of God himself.

The matter insists on being considered in still another aspect. If a son and the Father are involved, so are the other children in the family of God involved. The parental address of God in prayer in-

evitably leads to this consideration. Looking into his face and seeing the Father, we must surely look into the faces of his children and see our brothers. The racial question and the industrial question decline to stop short of the parental throne, even though some who discuss these questions prefer to hold the debates far off in the distances where the family element is not so emphatic. Crimes against our brothers seem more criminal in the presence of our Father. Shakespeare represents it thus in *Hamlet*. The king has murdered his own brother and now has that brother's wife and throne. Yet he must live with the remembrance of outraged brotherhood and feel ever the touch of crimson stains on his hands. So he is alone, as he thinks, wishing to ease his troubled soul with prayer. The ghost of that brotherhood forbids effectual approach to the Father's throne. There comes the pathetic confession:

"Pray can I not;
 Though inclination be as sharp as will,
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent:
 And, like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin."

To carry a brother's blood to the altar is not a good and peaceful preparation for prayer; and he wonders if there be rain enough in the "sweet heavens" to wash his hand as white as snow. His desperate soul comes forward with the suggestion that prayer is meant to secure pardon, and the resolve returns:

"Then I'll look up,
My fault is past. But, Oh, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murther!
That cannot be; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murther,
My crown, my own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned, and retain the offense?"

The effort at prayer ends in spiritual helplessness and the despairing words are addressed to his own guilty heart:

"My words fly up; my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Here the actual family relation was involved; yet it is only the lack of a vivid realization of brotherhood based on the divine Fatherhood that prevents a like realized defeat at the throne of grace. The sociologist who sees nothing but the

surface of life may scout the relation of prayer to the concrete problems of humanity. But the deeper sociology cannot get on without the conception of God's family; and in the end the altar of the Father will prove the holy place of reckoning and reconciliation among the brothers of that family. It may well be ceaselessly urged that the model prayer is not "My Father," with the suggestion of vested interest and exclusive privilege, but, rather, "Our Father," where a universal adjective pronoun insists on racial and industrial applications and waits for society to rise to its great meaning.

We cannot hope, however, that society will pass into that family mood until men and women shall gain the filial spirit that is impossible without the clear sense of God's Fatherhood. Carlyle once intimated that although he had surrendered some orthodox conceptions, he had been saved from suicide by "the aftershine of Christianity." It is a suggestive phrase. We may well query whether some of the decencies of life may not in our day be due to that "aftershine," even as we may

well query whether certain beneficent tendencies in some otherwise perilous social movements may not be due to that same "aftershine." But will an "aftershine" of an aftershine do the work? Is the reflection of a reflection equal to bringing light and warmth to the social groups of the day? Only the radiance of God's face, falling directly upon our lives, is equal to that colossal social need. The Father alone can make us brothers, whether by first birth or by second birth; and that brotherhood alone is adequate to the refashioning of the social order. In domestic relations the revelation and recognition of the common parent precede the feeling of brotherhood: and in the family of God the like fact obtains. The filial sense is the foundation of the fraternal sense: and the sons of God must come before the brothers of men.

Therefore a primary purpose of prayer must always be the securing of the filial heart. An eminent man relates that his son was fond of toy weapons. The boy's friends, discovering this, gave him for birthdays and Christmas Days gifts after

his liking, until at length his tiny room was stacked with wee daggers, swords, pistols, guns. The wise father concluded that the military instinct in the lad had been over-cultivated. So when the boy saw a beautiful gun in the store window and rushed home and prayed that the weapon might be bought for him, the father refused. The boy insisted; the father stood firm. Finally the little fellow declared that when he had first seen the gun he had prayed God to make his father buy it for him; and then he added, "And you tell me that God answers prayer!" After a moment he asked, petulantly, "Is there anything that God will give me right away—quick, without waiting, if I ask him?" The father prayed another Father to give him a right reply, and said: "Yes. If you will ask God to give you a heart that is kind and obedient to your own father, he will give it to you at once. Step into your room there, and ask him, and see." The childish fancy was caught by the suggestion. While the son prayed the father prayed too; and ere the father had lifted his head from the desk, the child returned to say, "I asked

him, and he did it without waiting." He prayed for the filial spirit, and the Father revealed by Jesus Christ ever waits to answer that prayer. Some day all of us individually, and the larger groups collectively, will be wise enough to pray not for the gaudy toys of the passing day, but for the filial hearts that harmonize us with God, and in so doing harmonize us with all the sons and daughters of God, so that the Father's house may be built upon the face of this present earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARENTAL THEOLOGY

ONE of the interesting developments in theology, or, perhaps better, in anti-theology, has been the attempt to put Saint Paul at variance with Jesus Christ. Occasionally the statement is unequivocally made that the great apostle took the simplicity of the Saviour's teaching and marred its appeal by giving it a severe and dogmatic cast. The impression seems to be in some quarters that the Master who mastered Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road was himself overmastered by Paul the theologian on the Dogma Road! On the face of it, this charge is an amazing one, for it almost makes a devoted and humble servant assume the place of his Lord. Moreover, it meets at the outset the stubborn fact that this mightiest dogmatist became the mightiest missionary, and that his strict constructions of formal faith did not prevent him from winning the

title of "the apostle to the Gentiles." If the test of truth be at all pragmatic, then surely the argument would lean in Paul's favor rather than in the favor of those less doctrinal apostles who seemed unable to carry the gospel over far lands and beyond far seas. We must, at least, admit that the system of theology which Paul worked out in the deserts of Arabia and amplified in his later busy itinerant days did not stop his activities and leave him in the closet of nice and technical speculation. Some of the features of his thought-out system may suggest certain features of his religious experience. His conversion on the highway could scarcely be called a gentle event. The man who saw a sudden "light from heaven," fell "to the earth," heard from the clouds the charge of persecution, was smitten to blindness, and remained for three days in darkness and "neither did eat nor drink"—such a man did not have a good start toward an easy and mild theology. It would indeed be a marvel if the convulsive elements of that initial experience had not exercised a decided influence upon Paul's interpretation

of his Lord and Master. Strong and vigorous movements in the church seem to have produced strong and vigorous systems of theology—whether those systems be Pauline, Augustinian, Lutheran, Calvinistic, or Wesleyan. Perhaps the law of heredity works doctrinally!

Without doubt Saint Paul felt himself charged with a polemic mission. That early faith was meeting with terrible opposition. A theological zephyr would scarcely have prevailed against the adverse winds, whether they blew from the Roman Empire, or from heathen religions, or from the Jewish Church. The task of interpreting Christ and his earthly career fell largely to Paul. Interpretation must, of course, come after the facts to be interpreted: and a full system of thinking about Christ could hardly be as sudden as was Paul's conversion. Amid Arabian hills the convert worked out his theory of Christ's person and mission. The grace and glory of that theory grew greater rather than less in his own mind and heart. All later experiences but confirmed the first experiences. Thus Paul became a splendid

dogmatist. He *knew* whom he had believed. In that unwavering and uncompromising faith he wrought out chapters of sacrificial heroism so that he never halted on the road of duty until the feet of the scholar pressed the path of the martyr and life was given up for Christ because his doctrine of Christ made the final sacrifice worth while and inevitable.

Nor do we need to deny that his knowledge of Rome and his citizenship in her empire affected his statements of theology. Even as John reached over into the Greek dictionary and seized the word "Logos" and made it stand for the Eternal Word of God, so Paul took Roman conceptions and sought to naturalize them into Christian meanings. One of these was a figure of speech based upon the Roman courtroom. If one cares to count, one will find that it is not, at most, a frequent metaphor or simile. It is apparent, as well, that Paul's references to God as Father would have been far more numerous if he himself had not been dominated by Christ as the express image of the Father. If it be not irreverent to think of some of the things

that Paul wrote in his Epistles as being spoken by Christ, we would find ourselves readily substituting "the Father" where the apostle uses "Christ." "Who shall separate us from the love of the Father?" "The love of the Father constraineth us." In this respect the possible substitutions would be many and full of meaning. Is it too much to say that the patri-centric theology of Jesus became the Christo-centric theology with Paul? An interesting parallel might be here drawn wherein certain sayings of Christ could be set in comparison, rather than in contrast, with certain well-nigh equivalent sayings of Paul; and the list would show that the absence of the teaching of the divine Fatherhood was explained by the presence of the love of Christ in the Pauline language. If this method be used, and there be added to Paul's direct mention of the Father these devoted references to the Son who manifested the Father in the flesh, we shall find that the figure based on the Roman courtroom is by no means a dominating figure with the greatest of the apostles.

It must, then, seem strange that formal theologians have so often seized upon the courtroom conception and have given it so large a place in their teaching. We may admit that it is not, taken alone, a revealing or appealing form of revelation. It is not revealing because few of us know much about courtrooms. Our children have not visited the quarters of the earthly judges, and many of us go through life without experience with judicial procedures. Test a Christian audience with the question, How many of you have ever been officially in a courtroom, whether as complainant, defendant, or witness, and the response is largely negative. When, therefore, a preacher says to his people, "Justification is a forensic term, borrowed from the Roman courtroom," he touches few chords of memory and experience. The chords that he does touch are not apt to be appealing. Those who have seen courtrooms do not confuse them either with the pleasant nurseries of childhood or with the later hearthstones in our fathers' houses! Unquestionably, there is a judicial chamber in every good father's heart,

and the judicial processes of condemnation and absolution are provided for in a father's nature. Yet the temple of our holy faith can never be an enlarged and glorified courtroom: and the Judge must not be allowed to banish the Father. Christ's picture of the final judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew is not to be dismissed. If some persons seem willing to place more emphasis upon its practical tests of food, and drink, and clothing than they do upon the moral cleavage which it describes as inevitable, we must still insist that the picture represents a part of the theology of Christ. Beyond that, we shall declare that the judgeship of God should be proclaimed in such proportion as it held in the total teaching of our Lord, as well as that the divine nature yearns in infinite desire for the privilege of saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

Inasmuch as Jesus follows this with the words "inherit the kingdom," we come upon the singular fact that the Kingdom-theology of Christ did not conquer his Father-theology. The more recent think-

ers of the Christian world have put proper emphasis upon the phrase that so often recurs in the New Testament, "the kingdom of God." In the midst of mighty movements toward democracy that royal figure of speech has more than held its own. The banishment of earthly kings seems only to have accentuated the conception of the heavenly kingdom. As in the above-named passage, Jesus more than once mingles the figures of the regal and the fatherly. Once again he said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." What a strange and beautiful mixing of metaphors! Flock, family, kingdom! There is a swift passage in feeling from one to the other. Yet in the end we note that it is the Father out of whose good pleasure the gift of the Kingdom comes. The prayer that begins with "Our Father" includes "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." It is the supreme evidence that the royal and the parental did not contradict each other in the teaching of Christ. He says "kingdom" far oftener than he says "King": and this is because the King

is the Father. Let one take the reported words of Christ and everywhere put "King" for "Father" and note how the appeal is lessened. There is here a kind of verbal miracle. Our prejudice against the "Kingdom" departs because the Kingdom is a parental one. The throne is at the hearthstone. The realm is the family. The sons and daughters are princes and princesses of the royal household. The decrees stand for the will of the Father in heaven. The pictures that we sometimes see of the crowned kings of earthly governments holding their children in their arms must frequently become parables for us. Those children are the subjects of the king, and they are also his sons and daughters. If the king be a true man, and so a true father, it is not difficult for us to imagine what authority in him most rules that intimate group. When King David went into the room that was in the tower over the gate and wept out his heart in grief over the death of the rebellious and treacherous prince, crying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee," it was not primarily

the cry of a monarch. The king has won: the father has lost. The deeper heart of David does not lift any banners of victory. It may be that the final and most dreadful charge against the wicked will be that in all the moral government of God the King was their Father.

Thus the Courtroom theology and the Throne-room theology come back to the parental theology for their meaning. Judicial thrones and royal thrones are distant from the most of us, but parents and homes are everywhere. Even when children are left in orphanhood, society seeks to institutionalize their care in a domestic form, while all the later social theories proclaim that the effort should be to bring the parentless and the childless together in an actual home. In normal life there come three opportunities for getting this domestic emphasis. In our first home parental love flows toward us in a gracious stream and grants us tender associations that bless all our earlier years. In our second home our love flows toward our children, as if, indeed, by God's appointment, the stream were beautifully reversed.

Often, too, the third home arrives and we see the faces of our grandchildren, just as if the Father in heaven would soften our hearts in that later period when our children have ceased to pray at our knees. Consequently, the commentaries of God's providence on the parental theology are several, and constant. They are supplemented by thousands of earthly tokens, by remembrances of loving sacrifice, by mementoes of unfailing patience, and by legacies of character that are beyond the price of all other possible inheritances. If Jesus had deliberately reviewed all life, so that he might found his theology upon the most ceaseless, most universal, most beautiful thing in life itself, he could not have chosen with diviner wisdom. Still, the signs of that deliberate review of life are not conspicuous in the recorded Gospels. Rather his message comes as if it were springing naturally and spontaneously from the heart of the Eternal as an answer to the prayer, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

We need not go on now with any formal

evidence for the theology of the Trinity. Our syllogisms are again inadequate at this point. Many who confessedly stand in awe before the ineffable mystery still find their hearts satisfied by something in the ancient doctrine and still firmly believe that the records of the Christian centuries show that all movements which discard the doctrine fail in wide appeal, lose the semblance of pentecostal power, and duly reach the stage where they have neither conviction nor strength sufficient for sending the saving message over all the oceans. But, apart from the stress gained for the doctrine in the history of the Christian faith, there seems recently to have been a swing toward a social emphasis. To gain this we do not need to give much attention to that early word in Genesis where God is represented as saying, "Let *us* make man in our own image," as if the words were not merely a divine soliloquy but, rather, a divine conference! One of the greatest of American clergymen preached years ago a sermon on "The Trinity Grounded in Humanity," and those who read the sermon felt that it had probably

been born at a baptismal font where a child had been consecrated to its heavenly Father by earthly parents, and where there had been won a sense of the completeness of life that led the preacher to perceive reverently something of that same completeness in the life of God. We may shrink from certain trilogies that are presented as arguments for the mystery of the Triune God. Earth and sea and air in the material world; and intellect, sensibility, and will in the personal worlds, may serve as poor illustrations instead of as good proofs of the threefold nature of the Infinite Being. Nor do we find our sympathy greatly stirred by any suggestion of a lonely God unless our theory shall provide for social life in the Eternal! But the idea that the completed life of man calls for a certain trinity of being and expression is not to be dismissed as a theological figment or made over into a charge of Tritheism when the conception is lifted to the being and expression of God. The fact that Christian doxologies and benedictions have been made to include the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

indicates a persistence that is not to be explained by mere routine and habit. There is something both revealed and concealed in that parental theology that persuades its way into the hearts of believers and secures its place in the august confessions of the church.

When we come to the doctrines that relate to the individual life of men, the conception of the infinite parenthood brings new meaning and new vitality. Long ago Professor Clifford made light of the Christian theory of divine forgiveness, putting his objection somewhat in this form: "Can the favor of the Sultan wipe the blood from the dripping hands of the Turks, when they have been engaged in the massacres of the Armenians?" Of course the illustration here was carefully selected for skeptical purposes. Presuming that there was a Sultan who loved the Armenians and that some of his subjects did engage in massacres, there is a provision even in kingly hearts and royal governments for a proclamation of pardon when proper conditions have been met. But why not elect the domestic realm for our illustra-

tion and so follow the teaching of Christ? Have our parents ever forgiven us? Have we ever forgiven our children? Some of us have touching experiences here—too sacred for recital in personal form. More than one son has heard the quavering voice of his aged mother say concerning himself when she did not know that he was a listener: "He was always such a good son. He never made us a bit of trouble." That unwilling, but grateful, eavesdropper always feels like crying out, "O mother of mine, would that what you say were strictly true!" He knows well that it is not formally so. He has memories of tiny mutinies and of small disobediences, or perhaps of longer estrangements. When he asks himself what has happened in the heart of the mother some of the biblical sayings come to him with fresh meaning. "He hath removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west." He has buried them in a sea of forgetfulness so deep that "remembrance may be had of them no more forever." The phrases sound as if God were so powerful toward himself that he could

choose forgetfulness of our misdoings when our remembrance of those same misdoings reaches the stage of repentance. At any rate, while real fathers and mothers live, and while real sons and daughters have memories, the forgiving God cannot lose his place in theology. The parental and filial moods in mankind will join in the assured ascription of the power of pardon to the Father in heaven.

The like thing may be said about the doctrine of free grace. A minister was once heard to object to Lowell's statement that while all things were "sold" at the "devil's booth,"

" 'Tis only God that is given away:

'Tis only heaven can be had for the asking."

The objection was based on the ground that any strict theory of free grace is impossible, and that the inner costs must always be paid. Certainly it is possible to overstate the doctrine of free grace and to construe it as a gift forced unconditionally even upon wicked hearts. This is not, however, the Christian conception. There is truly on the human side a moral

necessity for the doctrine. We cannot conceive that we can ever be so good in the future as to cause an excess of virtue to flow back upon our past—simply because we cannot at any time be better than we should be. Hence there is always a remainder that must be cared for by the generous grace of God, in answer not to a purchase price, but to a spiritual condition that makes the conferring of that grace of real effect. The domestic illustration may again bring help. A child comes to the father with a pert statement of its revolts and angers and with the smiling suggestion that the father accept a silver coin from the child's store and grant pardon on that ground. The parental heart cannot accept such a suggestion. There is the feeling that the transaction is superficial and does not at all deal with the heart of the moral difficulty. If, however, that child should come with a frank and humble confession of fault and with a silver tear brimming the eye, the grace of the father's forgiveness rushes eagerly to the child's heart. The child has not bought that grace with any kind of silver;

the child has simply met an inner condition that does not purchase and yet does win the gift. The transaction is "without money and without price" in all the coarser senses, but not without terms. If the prodigal son should claim that his weariness of the swine-field and of the famine, and his longing for the father's house bought the father's forgiveness and welcome, we should feel that his appropriate place was still in the distant land and in the evil company. His confession, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son," was in itself an evidence that the father could renew to him the proof and standing of sonship. Parents understand, though they may not be able to define, these deeper dealings of parental and filial hearts; and once again they find that their own experiences make for them an interpretation of the heart of the Father in heaven.

As in the instance of the prayer life there is the element of mutuality, so that God seeks communion with us as we seek communion with him, so in this realm of forgiveness there is a motive on the divine

side. Isaiah represents God as saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." We would perhaps more naturally have written, "for thine own sake," thus placing the reason for forgiveness on the side of man. By these insights into the heart of God Isaiah secures the title of "the evangelical prophet." The simple truth is that in the heart of good parenthood there is always a desire to extend forgiveness to children. Thousands of homes could furnish the proof of this parental nature. Is not this a frequent happening? The child's rebellion goes so far that something must be done. Reproof is given, or punishment, and the child is put to bed. Inevitably the parent's heart begins a questioning and reconciliation seeks its chance. Perhaps the frightened inquiry comes, "What if he should die to-night?" So directly there is a quiet excursion to the little bedroom—a listening for the regular breathing, an imprinted kiss upon the face of the sleeper. What explains this sacred happening? Is it a drama staged for the child's benefit? Does the tiny slumberer get the spiritual

satisfaction from the parent's behavior? Or is it not true that the parent could sincerely repeat over that cradle the words, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake"? In all our domestic worlds there are countless examples of this parental outreach, countless evidences that parenthood estranged from its beloved is pervaded by a holy restlessness and carries within itself a motive for forgiveness and reconciliation. So true is this that it may be affirmed that in all these spiritual transactions the father always meets the returning wanderer when he is "yet a great way off," and gives such welcome that the forgiven son does not have opportunity for finishing his prepared confessions! The repentant prodigal never completes his ritual of humble sorrow because it is always interrupted by the rush of forgiving welcome in accord with the nature given by the Eternal Father himself.

The doctrine of vicariousness may be brought to the same test. We can all understand the apostolic statement that to the Greeks the doctrine of the cross was

foolishness and to the Hebrews a stumbling-block. In that realm of vicariousness the Greek and the Jew in us all often clamor for a hearing. We are not now discussing a forced doctrine of vicarious substitution, though our minds must sometimes strain to discover the distinction among the various theories of vicariousness. As we grow older the more do we tremble when we think of a possible Christianity without a cross! We are selfish enough, even with a Calvary as a mount of revelation, and with the hand of Christ pointing to our minor crosses which must be taken if we are to be his disciples. Yet believers generally would confess that formal theories of the atonement leave them both cold and perplexed: and it is probably no exaggeration to say that, though we come more and more to trust the love that was shown on the cross, we depend less and less upon any dogmatic interpretation of the meaning of the cross itself for God. Dim hints occasionally reach us from our own parental experiences. A father in France stood by while his soldier son who had been decorated for bravery was out-

rageously cursed and abused by a young officer who was satisfying his early lust for power and authority. When later the son spoke of his own suffering, the father replied: "I suffered the more. It was a little bit like seeing my son going up to a small Calvary." The father meant no irreverence. He did catch a glimpse of the Eternal Parenthood. That element of vicariousness does not halt with sympathy alone; it is woven into the very warp and woof of true parenthood. There is a growing insistence upon the fact that all of Christ's earthly life was vicarious, and that the cross, so far from being out of harmony with all that went before, was simply its crown and its climax. True parents are sharers in that wider vicariousness. It sends fathers to their manual labor and mothers to their domestic toil. The recording angels of the Father's final abode daily write new chapters about parents who for the joy set before them carry all manner of crosses and who often likewise see of the travail of their own souls and bodies and are satisfied because, again, that is the nature of parenthood.

Somewhere an eminent preacher gives a vivid illustration, relating to theories of the atonement and dealing with the parable of the prodigal son, and of the father who was prodigal in forgiving love. Bystanders are described as watching the scene of reunion and pardon and as endeavoring to work out some theory of its meaning. One says, "The father is making cast to himself, penalizing his own nature in order that he may be both just and a justifier and may consistently grant forgiveness." Another says: "Nay! The father is protecting the majesty of his own law. His tears show that his own commands must not be held lightly." Still another says: "Not so! The father is enacting a touching drama so that its moral influence may move the hearts of the onlookers and may likewise be a lesson to the elder son." Hearing these theories we catch the exaggerated statements of great theologians, Hodge, and Miley, and Bushnell. Then a fourth bystander declares: "You are all wrong, or at least all partial, in what you say. The father is willing to take upon himself the cost of

his son's redemption. He is not indifferent to his own authority and law. He is anxious, too, about his elder son, as we shall later see. But no one of these things is enough; nor are they all combined sufficient. The father weeps because it is the nature of parenthood to grieve with the sorrows and sins of the child, and to seek, at its own expense of grace, to win the child into harmony with the parental heart."

No one would claim that the illustration answers all questions or meets all difficulties. It may, however, be affirmed with confidence that if light is to fall upon the doctrine of atonement, the light will be shed from the doctrine of divine parenthood. He who came to reveal his Father, and ours, put his final revelation in the lesson of Calvary in order that the cross might be an evidence of the unfilial nature of sin, of the divine estimate of the worth of those who have been made in the image of God, and of that holy love that will go the length of sacrifice to win sons and daughters back to the heart of the Father.

CHAPTER V

THE FILIAL STAGES

SAMUEL BUTLER once criticized the power that had made our world because that power had so timed the generations as to make them mingle. His sour suggestion was that it would have been far better if one generation died before the next was born. Evidently, he thought that the older people heckled the younger, and the younger people worried the older; and that there would have been more independence and more joy if parental and filial responsibilities had not been woven into the scheme of earthly things. It is suggestive that Butler's plan has an illustration in the lives of the butterflies, which make provision for covering and food sufficient to carry their young on to independence, but which themselves die ere their children come. The more thoughtful persons, however, will have no quarrel with the providence that has made some

contemporaneousness for parents and children. They will have no yearning for a "butterfly" type of life and will prefer the cradle as against the cocoon! They verily think that parental duties and filial obligations promise more for both happiness and character than would constant flutterings among the flower gardens of a careless earth. In this they agree with God. The sure fact is that he so made our world as to put parents and children together in the bundle of life. The generations are fitted into each other, and usually two, often three, and sometimes four families are joined in earthly relations so that great-grandparents meet their great-grandchildren in the comradeship of domestic years. Thus the parental emphasis is fixed in the organization of society and God has fashioned the world as an interpretation of the Infinite Father.

The last two verses of the final book of the Old Testament are almost startling in their meaning: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers

to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." In other words, the right mingling of the generations is the will of God. When that ceases the earth cannot fail to be smitten with a curse. It may, therefore, be affirmed that the mission of every Elijah who would be a true prophet is to bring the hearts of parents and children into right relations and to carry this sacred task even to the summit by turning the hearts of all the children of God to him. That work of mediation is the chief business of life. In our modern day schoolhouses and playgrounds and all other provisions for the training of youth are our testimonies to the importance of our work as mediators. We feel that the help of the past must come to the children largely through us; and we feel, as well, that our aid for the future must go largely through them. It is no wonder, then, that the binding together of the two Testaments is on this wise: The Old ends with a call for an Elijah who will bring the generations into the unity of God; the New begins with

"The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ," as if, indeed, the longed-for Elijah had come to reconcile parental and filial hearts everywhere to the end that the generations might be united in the love of Him from whom all generations spring—even the Everlasting Father.

The teaching of Jesus takes that mediation of parents toward children and makes it the illustration of the family of God. There are many examples in the Gospels. Probably this quotation has made the surest appeal, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" In all these transactions both parents and children are finding revelations of God, if only they have open eyes. A well-known educator, a minister and the son of a minister, gained this conception mainly out of his remembered sonship and somewhat, also,

out of his growing sense of parenthood. He hesitated to tell his clerical father, who had been classed among the conservatives, lest there be a theological disagreement. Yet when he did reveal the trend of his own feeling and thinking, he found that his father, working mainly from experienced parenthood and somewhat also out of remembered sonship, had joined his son in the parental creed. The incident is not an exceptional one. If biographies were fully revealed, many counterparts would be made known. The blessed idea works downward from father to son, and upward from son to father. The parent teaches the child many things about God; and the child teaches the parent many things about God; and in that tender mutuality the revelation of the Father goes on among all the generations of his sons and daughters!

It would be surprising if our literature did not fall under the spell of that teaching. The selections come from many quarters and ask for quotation. But there is perhaps no better parallel than that written by William Canton, an Englishman born

off the coast of China. His volume has a peculiar title, W. V.—Her Book. We do not read many pages without discovering that “W. V.” is the author’s daughter and that the book is in some degree a chronicle of family relationships. The conclusion is in a marvelous poem in which a particular earthly father’s attitude toward his child is made a commentary on God’s attitude toward each of his children. The heading is taken from Saint Paul and we enter upon the verses through the name “Abba, Father.” There is a meaning for our forgetfulness:

“Abba, in thine eternal years
Bethink thee of our fleeting day;
We are but clay;
Bear with our foolish joys, our foolish tears,
And all the willfulness with which we pray.

“I have a little maid who, when she leaves
Her father, and her father’s household, grieves,
But, being gone, and life all holiday,
Forgets my love and me straightway;
Yet when I write,
Kisses my letters, dancing with delight,
Cries, ‘Dearest father!’ and in all her glee
For one brief, live-long hour remembers me.
Shall I in anger punish or reprove?

Nay, this is natural; she cannot guess
How one forgotten feels forgetfulness;
And I am glad, thinking of her glad face,
And send her little tokens of my love.

“And thou—wouldst thou be wroth in such a case?

“And crying Abba, I am fain
To think no human father’s heart
Can be so tender as thou art,
So quick to feel our love, to feel our pain.”

There is comfort here, and not false encouragement, for those who must often chide themselves for forgetting God; since we must all know the feeling of the old Puritan captain who put up these words as a part of his morning prayer, “Lord, I am to have a busy and exciting day. If I forget thee, do not thou forget me.”

The parallel has a lesson for our discipline. The next verses are a transcript out of many parental experiences:

“When she is froward, querulous or wild,
Thou knowest, Abba, how in each offense,
I stint not patience lest I wrong the child,
Mistaking for revolt defect of sense,
For willfulness mere spriteliness of mind:
Thou knowest how often, seeing, I am blind;
How when I turn her face against the wall

And leave her in disgrace,
And will not look at her or speak at all,
I long to speak and long to see her face;
And how, when twice, for something grievous done,
I could but smite, and though I lightly smote,
I felt my heart rise strangling in my throat;
And when she wept I kissed the poor red hands.
All these things, Father, a father understands;
And am I not thy son?"

So does he move onward to the lesson of
our sorrows, even to that of the final sor-
row of our separations, only to find that
the parallel holds true to the end:

"Thou, Abba, knowest how dear
My little child's poor playthings are to her.
What love and joy
She has in every darling doll and precious toy;
Yet when she stands between my knees
To kiss good-night, she does not sob in sorrow,
'O father, do not break or injure these!'
She knows that I shall fondly lay them by
For happiness to-morrow;
She leaves them trustfully. And shall not I?

"Whatever darkness gather
O'er coverlet or pall,
Since thou art Abba Father
Why should I fear at all?"

The beauty and truth of the lines make
lengthy quotation excusable. They are a

translation into poetry of the Saviour's lesson wherein these earthly experiences in our homes are made dim copies of the heavenly attitude toward ourselves. While these verses give the good side of the comparison, it is not impossible to conceive that a terrible poem might recite unfilial behaviors that strained a father's heart or proved impervious to a father's love. Yet at the end the teaching stands, "If ye, being earthly parents, know how to give, how much more your heavenly Father!"

We can likewise follow this parallel in another form until it seems to stand for certain dispensations in dealing with the filial stages of life, not unlike those which are supposed to record God's dealings with his children. This is not an attempt to smuggle in a Trinitarian argument under an affectionate guise. None the less there is suggestiveness in the study. In our first relations with the child we have something of the sense of partnership with God as Creator and Preserver. We are compelled to deal largely with its physical life. The tiny wardrobe awaits its advent and

with its entrance into the world there is always the flutter of anxiety for the welfare of its body. When George Macdonald carries on his conversation with the child, newly come, he asks about its "eyes so blue," its "forehead so smooth and high," its "cheek like a warm white rose," its "three-cornered smile of bliss," its "pearly ear," and its wee "arms and hands." Natural questions these—for those who feel that they are sharers in the creative process of the world! Sometimes we must all feel that, if we had not given ourselves to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ before our first child came, we by his parental grace in us would have transformed the cradle of that child into an altar where our new father's heart would have found the heart of the Father in heaven.

That relation to the body of the child goes on in gentle care for a period of years. The whole regime of the household—its quiet, its temperature, its opening doors and windows—is regulated by our thought of that infant life. First teeth, first words, first steps are events, or even epochs, to be

recorded in the book of white and gilt! Two or three generations of parental eyes watch the miracle of its growth. But in due season we pass into a second period. The child's mind becomes more and more our care. When he is six we deem that he has enough physical independence, so that he may go to school. From that time he spends more of his conscious hours with his teachers than he spends with his parents. His mental growth becomes our delight or our anxiety. We have come with him into a new dispensation, even the teaching dispensation. Let it be insisted again that we are not arguing. Thoughtful men are not impressed by the claim of a more-or-less eminent theologian that the Lord's Prayer, beginning with "Our Father," proves itself in the progress of its petitions a kind of Trinitarian ritual! Whatever may be one's thought of the Trinity, the suggestive parallel here can scarcely fail to be meaningful. The word "teach," in its various forms, is used more frequently in describing the work of Christ than is the word "preach." We still call him "the Great Teacher," and surely his

teaching gave us no more important lesson than when he made the homes of earth the schoolrooms whose emphasis should be upon the dealings, with his children, of God the Father.

That teaching period for our children moves all too quickly. The signs of its passing sometimes disturb us. Occasionally we try to lessen the tragedy by our laughter. We come back home from a journey to be greeted by the youngest son disporting proudly his first pair of long trousers! Our hearts flutter and we feel like saying to the companion of our parenthood, "Our little boy has gone away, and he will never come back any more." We know that when that gate of youth drops down behind our children, they do not return again to those dewy days, save by the route of memory. We must frequently find ourselves in much sympathy with the efforts of parents to prolong the youth of their children and not to give them too soon the garments that are the symbols of approaching maturity. The emphasis of our relation with them keeps shifting. The physical care for them takes

on a different form, and may become a care for ourselves. We marvel at the strength of their bodies. We do not play tennis with them any more; nor do we wrestle with them, save in the fashion of mere play. Our gifts for their bodies are of a different kind and are conferred in a different way. The range of their physical liberty is enlarged, because we feel that the time has come when their own souls must take control of their bodily powers. There is a change, likewise, in our intellectual care for them. When the youngest one comes and asks us to help him with his algebra or geometry, we tell him to counsel with his sister who has just graduated from college! We admit reluctantly that in certain technicalities of the mental life we have dropped behind them, if, indeed, they have not passed ahead of us! We are ceasing to be their instructors in order that we may become their counselors.

Then we move over into the dispensation of the spirit. Physically our children may be self-supporting now, and the parental purse does not need to open to them. In most regions of knowledge they could

teach us many things. Still we are not humiliated. On the contrary, we are proud. The good passes in order that the better and the best may come. It is a wonderful day when the son says to the father for the first time: "Will you step into the next room with me? I want to consult with you." It is also a wonderful day when all the counsel ceases to flow in one direction and the return current reaches the father's heart from the heart of his son. Thenceforth petition becomes less and communion becomes more. The law of filial liberty in the son makes needless the law of fatherly authority. If in the first stage our gifts for our children are largely physical, and if in the second stage our gifts are largely intellectual, in the third stage our gifts are primarily spiritual. Of course the border lines of these stages are not fixed in any measured way, and all the types of gifts may be mixed in each. Still, we are aware of the changing emphasis. We are likewise sure that one of the finest things that our gifts of any sort may win from our children is the filial mood toward ourselves. Sometimes

that mood virtually idealizes us—considering us great when we know that we are not, deeming us well-nigh perfect when a candid review of ourselves makes us most humble, offering us confessions of their confidence in us that often send us to God with a prayer that he may make us worthy of our children's thought. Their loving anxiety for our repute, our safety, our comfort is a final reward for all the sacrifice of parenthood. As they reach this period we often find ourselves saying, "Thank God for such good sons and daughters"; and the primary thanksgiving in us comes because in our parental kingdom they have ceased to be mere subjects and have become filial children in all their attitudes toward ourselves. Parents thus blessed are dull in spirit unless from all this they secure a revelation of the larger heart of the heavenly Father.

Presuming that we have gotten that heart from God himself, created and nurtured in us by his Spirit working through the experiences of the years, our ambitions for our children move up to the highest levels. We do not worry so much about

what is going to happen to their physical lives; or, at any rate, we seek to preserve the physical in order that it may be made the servant of the spiritual. We want them to live, but for some loftier reason than bodily life alone. In *The Heart of a Fool* William Allen White makes a pious Puritan old mother—who has seen her son return from luxurious swine-fields and who at last loses his physical life in an act of sacrificial heroism—cry out in mournful ecstasy, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” Her grief over the son’s body that had been smothered by the waters of earth was more than offset by her rejoicing that his spirit had been laved by the cleansing streams from the fountain of life. There was something else in the event that her maternal humility would not have permitted her to claim, or perhaps even to hold in consciousness—the sense of her share in the heroism, of her fruition in the character of her son; as if, in truth, her pride, and anxiety, and patience, and prayer, and outpouring love had at last won their conquest. The deed of her boy, done for another, had really

been done for her whose name had surely been in the heroic purpose. The filial had joined the parental, and the two had found a unity in the will that had commanded the body to become the servant of a saving spirit. This parent-mother knew something of the joy of God the Father.

While as parents we would not deny our high estimate of social and intellectual gifts, we still come to think of them in their bearing on higher things. If the heavenly Parent holds us subject to his own ideals, we are not so anxious about the social standing of our children. When fancy and glittering society claims them for a time and begins to obscure for them the real aims of the soul, we betake ourselves to anxious prayer. When we see them in an artificial endeavor to guard their social status, we have a little of the wish that they might not feel that the status was precarious, but we have more of the wish that they may not so elect their companions as to lose the feeling of the family of God. If they seem in danger of becoming the victims of a purely social ambition, and so of losing real life in a

cheap and delightful vacancy, we yearn that they may yet gain that higher social ambition that counts all men as brothers because God is Father. We want the social sense subordinated to the filial and spiritual sense. It is even so with our longings for the intellectual life of our children. The most of us cannot hope that our children may become geniuses and may repeat the literary exploits of Milton and Shakespeare. If we could make a register of the hearts of good parents, who seek to form their parenthood after the pattern of the Infinite Father, we would find therein increasing prayers that the children may be good men and women, yielding themselves in filial eagerness to the service of the parental kingdom and walking gladly the road that leads to the Father's house.

Without question parental moods and experiences have had a decided influence upon the theology of the church. A black man has written a poem for his race, and ours, ending with the words,

"Lord, forgive me if my need
Sometimes shapes a human creed."

But in this case men and women will need no forgiveness if only they draw their articles of faith from the true and balanced sense of parenthood. That sense does not change the nature of God; neither does it change the method of the divine household; yet it does change the expressions by which men have attempted to describe the heavenly Father's relation to men. Through all the centuries there has been a parental referendum on theology. That referendum has made it hard for an overdone ritualism, since human parents do not readily suggest a rigorous insistence upon etiquette. It has also made it hard for an overdone imperialism, as ascribed to the nature of God, since human parents do not make primary the protection of their own authority. The plebiscites gathered from the hearts of parents have been the makers and modifiers of many creeds. The homes of Germany must have been Luther's chief aids in a contest against priestly mechanism, while the homes of other lands came to the voting booth in a protest against any theories of election and reprobation that violated the sense of parenthood. The

theology of Jesus being as it is, the genuine fathers and mothers must ever be chief influences in saving the creed of Christ from perversion. They press toward the doors of scholarship where the learned seek to frame the expression of the great faith, and they become the champions of God the Father.

As an example of overdone ritualism, we find a description in "The Vision" in the fourth Canto on "Hell." Dante represents himself as being led by his great escort to the first circle that surrounds the abyss of woe. He describes the scene thus:

"Here, as mine ear could note, no plaint was heard
Except of sighs, that made the eternal air
Tremble, not caused by tortures, but from grief
Felt by those multitudes, many and vast,
Of men, women, and infants. Then to me
The gentle guide; 'Inquirest thou not what spirits
Are these which thou beholdest? Ere thou pass
Farther, I would thou know that these of sin
Were blameless; and if aught they merited
It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,
The portal to thy faith.'"

For the present discussion the significant words are "and infants" and "since bap-

tism was not theirs." In short, Dante consigns children to the place of rising and trembling sighs because these little people had not been given baptism! Many people of all faiths have seen their unbaptized babies complete a short journey on earth and then take their way into the next world. What must parental judgment and justice and love say concerning a doctrine that exalts ritual and degrades God, until the Infinite Father is inevitably seen as having less fairness and affection than earthly parents? The answer is quick and emphatic. Such a theory makes it necessary to save God as well as to save children. Such a ritualistic emperor is not the one revealed by the Christ who took the little ones in his arms and said, "The Kingdom of heaven belongeth unto such." The suffrages of fathers' and mothers' hearts will outvote Dante and all the sacramentarian theologians whose lurid beliefs are portrayed in the poetry of horror.

In the way of overdone imperialism we find an interesting, and confessedly extreme, illustration in an antique poem of New England. Let it be quickly granted

that the form of theology which it presents has passed and that, from the standpoint of present need, there is no reason for dragging the verses into controversy. They do, however, offer a signal instance of the way in which a parental referendum has defeated the theological dogmatist. Michael Wigglesworth was a giant figure in his day, pastor in one town for almost fifty years, friend of the Mathers, and considered for the presidency of Harvard, if not, indeed, offered that honor. He wrote a poem entitled "The Day of Doom," which was a description of the Judgment Day. The weird verses had a wide circulation, considering the limited area of the reading public, and unquestionably had no little influence in that long-gone time. The chief interest for our present point lies in the treatment of nonelect infants who offer a protest to God, the Judge, against being held responsible for Adam's sin. They present the pathetic question:

"How could we sin, who had not bin,
Or how was his sin our
Without consent, which to prevent,
We never had the power?"

This looks like a convincing alibi! Yet God is brought into the dialogue as follows:

“Then answered the Judge most dread,
God doth such doom forbid
That men should die eternally
For what they never did.

“But what you call old Adam’s fall,
And only his trespass,
You call amiss to call it his;
Both yours and his it was.

“Had you been made in Adam’s stead,
You would like things have wrought,
And so into the self-same woe
Yourselves and yours have brought.

“Yet to compare your sin with their
Who lived a longer time,
I do confess yours is much less,
Though every sin’s a crime.

“A crime it is; therefore in bliss
You may not hope to dwell,
But unto you I shall allow
The easiest room in hell.

“The glorious King, thus answering,
They cease and plead no longer.
Their conscience must needs confess
His reasons are the stronger.”

Wigglesworth may represent the imaginary nonelect infants as yielding to such an

imaginary God. Real parents, however, will not yield so readily. Certainly an election of creed went on in parental hearts all over New England; and certainly the mothers of that region must often have carried the case from the verse of the Puritan pastor to the gentler court in Christ's own heart, where they might hear the words, "Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." In that strife with a harsh, if sincere, creed, the heart of parenthood was destined to win. The voting was long-continued; and we see clearly now that the formal and abstract theologian could not force upon the world an article of so-called faith that affronted the ethical instincts of fathers and mothers. Deeming that God was at least as just and fair as themselves, they defended him against an evil creedal report, coming to the help of the Lord against the theologically mighty, and restoring his name to the primal glory of Jesus' teaching, that he might appear again as the heavenly Father.

A great poet wrote for us this language:

“Children are God’s apostles, day by day
Sent forth to preach of faith and love and work.”

Even more, they are sent forth to preach of God. They bear with them Bibles, hymns, rituals, sacraments, creeds. They pass into the company of yet another Child who was himself to glorify childhood because he revealed the final Parenthood. When God would give the world that ultimate revelation, he disappointed some expectations. The dome of the heavens did not break to admit earthward a glorious and impressive Visitor. Nor did some mighty volume drop from the wisdom of the skies, with detailed guidance for all of life. Rather, a Jewish woman walked a road of pain that led to motherhood, and the cry of a Child was heard on the air of the Judæan night. Unto us a Son was born that he might in season teach us to say, “Our Father.”

CHAPTER VI

THE CONFERRED PARENTHOOD

USUALLY the lesson of the divine Fatherhood receives its earthly application in the assertion that the doctrine makes a comprehensive human brotherhood. We are rightly told that when we look into the face of God as Father we are at once compelled to turn from the holy altar and to look into the faces of all men and women as being brothers and sisters. The conclusion is, of course, an inevitable one. The formal expression of it has had wide currency and is even very popular. Occasionally also the divine Fatherhood part is dropped and an effort is made to retain the theory of the human brotherhood. At this present period, in some quarters of the world, religion is being treated as a superstition, while its vocabulary of family life is being used as a slogan! The endeavor is as interesting as in the long run it will prove tragic. The God and

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Father of Jesus Christ is the only foundation for the family life of humanity. Robbing the world of its real parenthood, we shall turn it into an orphan asylum wherein a coercive institutionalism must take the place of the warm and vital elements of the genuine home. Brotherhood and sisterhood are usually predicated on a common parenthood; and when the Parent is converted into a huge fiction, the fiction declines to halt in the skies. It falls earthward; and the recognition of men and women as actual brothers and sisters follows its foundation over into the realm of fiction! The family life slowly goes with the Head of the family into the region of the discarded. Humanity will not long talk truly and act affectionately and efficiently about "our brothers" when once it loses the reverent art of saying "Our Father."

Nor should the adherents of true and spiritual religion permit themselves to be robbed of their banners. The vocabulary of brotherhood is not the essence of the religious life; for the moods of life are deeper than its words. None the less,

some of the expressions that bear an essential meaning should not be surrendered either to the enemies or to those mild friends who will give the expressions a fading and weakening meaning. Once some of our churches used the terms "brother" and "sister" socially. The habit was not easy for some people whose natures were somewhat reserved: often, too, the use of the words for only the professed members of the Christian family seemed to raise an invidious distinction. Thus the habit has largely passed. Those who use the terms as forms of social address are often regarded as dear old relics: and the arched eyebrows of an assumed or real culture indicate that the addressed are not eager to claim such close relationship with the addressee. The brotherly approach is sometimes met by an attitude that is not even cousinly! Doubtless the mere vocabulary is not so important. Yet thoughtful Christian men may well wonder as to the long-run effect if the brother-and-sister expressions depart from the usage of the church only to be adopted by the lodges and the labor organizations! Those who

are related to all three of these orders cannot fail to note that transfer of speech: and surprised eyebrows do not check the familiarity when it appears in these extra-church regions! The church need not make a plea for empty forms of words. But on any theory that makes it a significant institution of the life of God in the world, there should be no giving up of the idea that the church holds the custodianship of the names of men and women as brothers and sisters because it has the custodianship of the name of God the Father.

Important as all this may be, it does not exhaust the social implications. It may seem strange to speak of an addition to the feeling of brotherhood that makes brotherhood more than brotherhood. Yet the reverent logic of our Christian faith not only permits, it compels, that addendum. If we have a Christlike God; and if the word of Christ is to abide truly,—“be ye therefore perfect, even as the Father which is in heaven is perfect,” then our likeness to God must ever bring an increased sense of parenthood in ourselves. The initial foundation for this is

laid by divine grace in human life. There is surely an instinct of parenthood. This appears early in our little children. Our wee girls have their dolls, to which they give names and around which they gather all the tiny paraphernalia of home-keeping. He who sees only play in all this sees not the depths. It is far more than a humorous and infantile make-believe. It is the first expression of a mood planted in those young hearts by the power of the Infinite Parent. That terrible teacher in Dickens' novel who tried to rout the imagination of childhood and to blot out that realm of fancies wherein children walk by God's good purpose was himself a murderer of instincts and ideals. In the case of the boys the parental beginnings do not show themselves so plainly. Dolls are avoided, because already the pride of sex asserts itself. For a time the Teddy Bear came as a masculine relief; but always the care of animals, and especially of young animals, gives the boy his chance to express the providentially conferred mood of parenthood. Sometimes this instinct in both sexes goes wild and becomes a perversion.

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The woman grown avoids actual motherhood and becomes a silly nurse to lower animals, hovering over cat or dog and having no slight knowledge that a divine instinct has been sadly aborted; while the man grown becomes a boon companion of terriers and finds his chief delight in canine company. It is again God's good gift, sadly diverted, or held to the infantile plane. But the great fact does remain that in all the normal life of the young we find that divinely prepared basis for the parental mood; and on that basis our homes are builded by Him who setteth "the solitary in families"—even God the Father.

It was, of course, inevitable that this parental mood should find its largest field in the religious life, and that our parenthood should seek the higher parenthood. All unconsciously religious order has been prone to adopt the domestic vocabulary. Even in those churches where the policy of celibacy prevails the vocabulary of the hearthstone insists on an abiding place. The word "Pope" means father; and the Italian people call the head of the Roman

Catholic Church by the name that our wee daughters use for their fathers, while over the world the phrase "Holy Father" is frequently heard. The cleric of a certain grade becomes known as a "patriarch," a father-ruler! The humblest parish priest is known as "Father." There have been instances where mothers and grandmothers have made confession to sons and grandsons, and in each case addressed the priest as "Father." The nuns become "Sisters," and the monks become "Brothers." In truth, domestic speech seems to run the whole gamut of the celibate system, as if the instinct, which has been denied the family life, held on to its speech and adapted it to a "household of faith." The development of this vocabulary in the communions that have adopted celibacy for the so-called "religious" would make an interesting study and would doubtless furnish a long witnessing to the fact that the nature of the divine parenthood inheres in human life and scatters its tokens in the least expected places. It would seem as if it were difficult for any man to become in a peculiar way God's representative without

winning in some fashion the title of fatherhood, gained by the professed relation to God the Father.

Without doubt some arguments can be presented for the policy of a celibate priesthood. The life wholly kept for the church could apparently do some things for the Bride of Christ that could not be done by one who had the double care of a domestic and ecclesiastic household. Some great Protestants have adopted celibacy as their personal policy—Francis Asbury, Jesse Lee, Emanuel Swedenborg, Phillips Brooks, are examples. Others, like John Wesley and Thomas Coke, were late in founding their homes, and left their friends in doubt as to the wisdom of their belated marriages. But for normal persons and normal conditions the spiritual argument must ever be against clerical celibacy. Let it be granted that often we find childless persons in whom the parental instinct is larger than it is in others who have had actual parental experience; and then let it be granted, again, that parental experience would in all these good instances have greatly increased and exalted the parental mood. Long

since Henry Ward Beecher wrote: "We never know the love of a parent until we become parents ourselves. When we bend over the cradle of our first-born, God's hand pushes back the temple door and reveals to us the sacredness and mystery of a father's and mother's love to us." The matter goes further and higher, and the revelation does not stop short of God. Human parenthood bears with it a divine revelation. When Martin Luther married Catherine von Bora and set the example for a married clergy in Protestantism, he rendered a deep service to real theology. The teachers of religion were henceforth to enter upon experiences which were commentaries on the nature of God. In their finite fatherhood they were to get gleams of the Infinite Fatherhood. More and more it becomes apparent that the children of ministers pass far beyond the average in the distinction and extent of their service to the world. The higher biographies give their names in numbers utterly beyond their numerical proportion; and when one reads the list one trembles to think what the world would have lost

if clerical celibacy had been maintained in Protestantism. Yet the deeper seal for a married clergy is not even at this point; it lies in a still more spiritual region. The experience of parenthood gives a living interpretation of God. Since he is what Jesus declared him to be, then what we earthly parents are becomes a revealing of his nature, his mood, his purpose. The religious teacher who does not know that his parenthood keeps making additions to his teaching is utterly superficial either in his feeling or in his thinking. When our children begin to say "Father" to us, it becomes both easier and more real for us to turn to God with the address of Christ, even "Our Father."

Speaking spiritually, it is just here that the tragedy of childlessness is often most keenly felt. Clergymen should always be careful in their handling of so delicate a matter. In every Christian audience there are men and women whose deepest grief lies in their denied parenthood. When one's arms have the sense of emptiness, and one's heart a perpetual ache because of the child that never came, it is a bitter expe-

rience to hear blistering words of suspicion. At this point there should be enshrined words that James Whitcomb Riley wrote. They came to him, as he said, without known objective cause, as if indeed they had fallen from some sky of inspiration. The next day there came to him the message that his dear friend, Bill Nye, had lost his child. One can imagine the sorrowing father reading these lines from the bachelor comrade whose instinct of parenthood made him the greatest poet of childhood on earth:

“Let me come in where you now sit weeping,
Aye, let me who have not any child to die
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

“The little arms that slowly, slowly loosed
Their pressure round your neck,
The little hands you used to kiss,
Such arms, such hands, I never knew,
May I not weep with you!

“Fain would I be of service, say something
Between the tears that would be comforting,
But, ah, so sadder than yourself am I
Who have no child to die.”¹

¹ From *Poems Here at Home*. Copyright, 1893. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

CONFERRED PARENTHOOD 143

There is wondrous insight here, a piercing glance toward the center of the world's spiritual order. Even the imagined child of a deeply parental heart prepared for a more sympathetic entrance into the home of grief. "Like as a father pitieth"—how the words come back to life with every dawning day of sorrow! And they come back with their larger essence of comfort because more and more the parental experience of the race becomes funded into a vast and tender instruction about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is often precisely here that we secure the greatest gains of the years. There are advantages of youth, its bubbling joys, its sense of adventure, its unscared optimism, its unsoubered confidence. There are also advantages of age. If Browning in his oft-quoted tribute to maturity had cared to particularize, he might have said that the splendid "half" not shown to youth lies in the delicious experience of parenthood, if that comes to us by the will of God, or in the increased parental sense which is God's sure will for all normal and true-hearted adults. Oliver Wendell Holmes has a poem

in which a man is represented as longing to be young again; but when asked if he desired to surrender wife and children and all the successes that the years had brought, he discovered that what he really wanted was to give up age while still keeping the things that can come only with age! The truth doubtless is that normal persons would not accept the return of youth on the condition that they give up all the accumulated wealth of the years. In that accumulation our increased and enriched sense of parenthood has a considerable place. Sometimes even our sorrows add to these parental riches. Our children abide with us for a time and then pass into the nearer care of God; yet do they always leave legacies, even though their tiny hands write no wills. They bequeath to us a larger and deeper interest in the life of all childhood; the writer of these lines had caught the secret:

“Because of one dear infant head
With golden hair,
To me all little heads
A halo wear;
And for one saintly face I knew,
All babes are fair.”

CONFERRED PARENTHOOD 145

One of the surprises of grieving fathers and mothers is the discovery of what our departed children do for us. "The service of the inner shrine" to which they pass is not necessarily over yonder; it is here in our own bosoms—the shrine about which we gather all the children in the tenderness of our love, as if in truth we were more and more gaining the feeling of the Infinite Father.

Sometimes this mood monopolizes us in a gracious fashion, even to the flowering out into philanthropies that represent all our loves and toils. The illustrations are many; the mention of two will suffice. Let one read the story of Leland Stanford, Junior, University. Where was it born? In the hearts of sorrowing parents who sought to fill a place made vacant by the departure of one youth by building an educational home for many thousands of youth. Read again the story of the Florence Crittenton work. Where was it born? In the broken heart of a father who lost his innocent child and then adopted for his care the poor girls that were no longer innocent! When our children abide with

us they still have that way of enlarging our parenthood. It is interesting to note how almost unconsciously we often lose our first names because our parental feeling identifies us. We cease to call each other John and Mary because the titles of father and mother altogether claim us. When we do become conscious of all this we are not touched with shame, nor do we mind it when the thoughtless smile at our unconventionality. In a way life is swallowed up of parenthood. If it be that this mood is held at all in a spiritual way, it is a sign that we are becoming more like the God whom Jesus revealed. A well-known English clergyman on a visit to the United States was crossing a city park when a poor girl with a haggard and tear-stained face mistook him for a Roman priest and, dropping upon her knees before him, said, pathetically, "Please bless me, Father." What should an ultra-Protestant do? Should he refuse to give a benediction lest he promote superstition? Or should he give it in the name of his heart's parenthood? The clergyman was Mark Guy Pearse; and we well know

what he did. He placed his hands upon the brow of that poor girl and said twice with genuine feeling, "God bless you, my dear daughter." It was the father in him appealing to that higher fatherhood whose servant he was. Here, again, lies one of the advantages of the increasing years. Directly we begin to feel our relation to all childhood and youth growing more and more like that of Jesus Christ. We find it ever more possible to interpret these lines—"They brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." What a dreadful thing it would have been if the record had noted that one little child had not been taken and touched by the Saviour's hand and had been excluded from his gracious command or his loving claim! The streets of the ancient city witnessed on that day an example that seemed to make Him who taught us the parental form of prayer

the very thing that he did teach—"Our Father."

With Him that attitude did not cease with the little children. The illustrations are several. Two that deal with both sexes will be sufficient. One deals with that palsied man in Capernaum whose friends, hearing that the healer was in the village, carried the cot with its helpless burden down the streets, circumvented the crowd by climbing to the house's roof, tore away the thatched covering, and dropped the smitten one into the Saviour's presence. We know not that sick man's age. But palsy is not often a young man's affliction: and in all probability he was older than the healer. Jesus said unto him, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." We feel like lingering with that word "Son," addressed to one who doubtless by the calendar of earth was older than Christ himself. Could you have said that when you were thirty or thirty-one, and that to a person who was quite your senior? Was that form of address that day a natural expression of the eternal Fatherhood that was in the speaker? And was the way in

which he said "Son" one of those unintended evidences that so often meet us in the scriptural records that the man who said "Son" was himself the only begotten Son of the Father full of grace and truth? There is another story to the same effect—this, too, told early in Mark's Gospel. There was a woman who had been ill for twelve years. The record means no sarcasm when it tells that she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered." She crept up "in the crowd," whispering to herself, "If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole." She touched him healingly; and he felt that virtue had proceeded from him. The wondering disciples said, "Thou seest the multitudes thronging thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?" The woman comes forward with her confession and "told him all the truth," as she "fell down before him." "He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Again we tarry with the fatherhood of the story. In this case, almost without question, the woman was older by

the almanac than was Christ, yet he calls her "Daughter," and there reaches us no hint of presumption or indelicacy! We may not press these incidents beyond measure. But would any man who may at thirty or thirty-one have been quite matured and placed under heavy ministerial responsibilities have addressed persons older than himself in this fatherly fashion? We could scarcely have done it, unless an ecclesiastical custom had made it conventional; yet he, out of a heart that held a parental mood not explained by his terrestrial years, said "Son" and "Daughter" in such tones that the words reach us now over all the millenniums. Reverence will say that the expressions came into the written Gospels because they stand for the glory which Jesus had with the Father before the world began.

That mood of parenthood is conferred upon all his beloved who follow him through the years. We become more than brothers and sisters to the race; we become fathers and mothers. Our temptation is to call young people sons and daughters; and the spirit of Christ within

us batters down social and racial lines when we approach all youth. If our work calls us to deal with young life, we find in due season that the parental feeling is a part of our equipment. Every true and great teacher must have this attitude. Experienced educators begin directly to test all candidates by this standard. You cannot have an Arnold of Rugby unless there be a fatherly heart. In a large way teachers stand in the stead of parents. They are co-fathers and co-mothers, working with us for our children. Some of us have known teachers in colleges to be born again with the coming of their own children. Once they were harsh and hard and seemed to feel that the failure of a student in their departments was a sign of their own high standards. When the parental mood arrives, either from the actual experience of parenthood or by the increased instinct, the word "failed," when written after the name of some other person's child, spells grief for the teacher's own heart. When that spirit dwells for a long time in the hearts of our instructors, it fashions many of the saints of earth.

We find some such men and women in every college—Peabody at Harvard; Buck at Boston; Merrick at Ohio Wesleyan; Cleveland at Bowdoin; Hoose at Southern California; Gobin at DePauw! They became fathers to a multitude of students: and in so doing, though they themselves were beautifully unconscious of the fact, they won for themselves more and more the grace that was in the Great Teacher. The conferred parenthood grew with the additions of the decades, each year showing less of the mere professionalism and more of the true paternity, until at last we felt that we had collegiate commentaries on the fact that the world's Greatest Teacher had said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

There is likewise the wider application. We should not slur or discount the conclusion. If Jesus be correct in his claim that he reveals the Father, and if the great business of life is to become like Christ and to work in the spirit of Christ, then advancing Christian character shows to others, if not to ourselves, the increasing sense of parenthood. With men who

represent Christ as his ministers and who never allow their professionalism to defeat their true spirit, this sense becomes one of the prized possessions of life. Make up the list of the persons in your community, whether ministers or laymen, who came to be known and addressed in each case as "Father," and then estimate them. Was that title ever used by hundreds of people outside the domestic circle in addressing a man who was a reprobate in living? Or was it not always used to designate one who by long following of Christ had made our name for him natural? Surely, we have here an assured test of character. All our other tests deceive us. This one remains certain. Whenever we meet any man or woman in normal health and make the discovery that he or she does not like children, it is an indubitable token of a deficient and evil character. The people who do not know how to take the children in their arms, as did Christ; and the people who do not know how Jesus felt when the splendid young man stood before him and caused the writer of a Gospel to catch something in Christ's face that led him to

make this record, "And Jesus, looking upon him, loved him"—such people have not arrived at character: they are not yet even hopeful candidates for sainthood. When we drop out of yearning and affectionate sympathy with the young, it is well for us to look to our own souls. The very spirit of God the Father is departing from us. How can we dwell in peace and joy in the Father's presence if we are not like the Father? The young cannot fully understand this word; the wicked cannot comprehend it in any degree; but those who walk with Christ along the ways of life find that the parenthood in their hearts meets the parenthood in the heart of the God and Father of Jesus Christ in a solemn gladness until they are transformed, and transformed, and transformed, passing from one glory to another, even as by the Lord, the Spirit. God keeps conferring upon us his own nature—and so much so that at length we come to hope that we shall not enter a strange abode when finally by the grace and guidance of Christ we enter the portals of the Father's house.

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SEP 26 '44	St. Charles	
NOV 13 '44	Breton	
JAN 1 '45	G. C. Schwan	DEC 20 '44
MAR 18 '45	R. C. Caldwell	
MAY 8 '45	E. F. Adams	JUN 3 '45
FEB 5 '46	J. B. Smith	FEB 10 '46
FEB 23 '46	H. H. H. H.	FEB 10 '46
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